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# THE LOVE OF AN UNCROWNED QUEEN

VOL. I

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# THE LOVE OF AN UNCROWNED QUEEN

## SOPHIE DOROTHEA, *CONSORT OF* GEORGE I., and her Correspondence with PHILIP CHRISTOPHER COUNT KÖNIGSMARCK (*Now first published from the originals*)

BY
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WITH 42 PORTRAITS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

*VOL. I*

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# PREFACE

IT has been too generally assumed that the romance of the English Crown passed away with the Stuarts. Writers of fact and fiction—historians, novelists, poets, and playwrights—have concentrated their energies on the period of English history covered by the Stuart dynasty, and the Georgian era has been comparatively neglected. The reason is not far to seek. Our Hanoverian kings had none of the picturesqueness of their unfortunate predecessors; they lacked alike their splendid failings and their redeeming graces; and until the accession of George III. they were wholly foreign to the people of England. Despite this, the kings and queens of the House of Hanover have an interest that is all their own. Especially is this true of Sophie Dorothea, the ill-fated consort of George I. The story of her romantic life has been shrouded in mystery, and she has been even more misrepresented than the "Queen of Tears," Mary Stuart. Her imprisonment in the lonely castle of Ahlden was longer and more rigorous than Mary's captivity in England, and the assassination of Königsmarck was as dramatic as the murder of Rizzio.

It is strange that so little should be known of the consort of the first of our Hanoverian kings. It is not the fault of the book-makers, who for nearly two centuries have been continually compiling pamphlets and so-called memoirs, some in English, but more in German. Only two are worthy of mention, the *Octavia* and *Die Herzogin von Ahlden*.[1] The *Octavia* was written during Sophie Dorothea's lifetime. by her champion and cousin, Duke Antony Ulrich of Wolfenbüttel. It was a fairly true version of the Princess's story; but the bias of the writer and the form of the work, which partook of the nature of a *roman à clef* presented in dramatic dialogues, told against accuracy. Many of the later works have been merely echoes of the *Octavia*. *Die Herzogin von Ahlden* was written more than a hundred years later by Count Schulenburg-Klosterrode, and published anonymously in Leipsig in 1852. This little book, the fruit of much labour and research, was compiled from all the documents and authorities then available. It gathered together a mass of evidence and summed up all there was to be said. Yet "lives" of the Princess continued to appear from time to time, none containing any new facts, and most of them merely a *réchauffage* of previous fables.

[1] Both were in German, and are now out of print. I have given a list of some others in the Appendix.

Without fresh facts or documents there would be no excuse for entering upon a ground already much covered. But since the publication of *Die Herzogin von Ahlden* many interesting papers have come to light. When Prussia annexed the Kingdom of Hanover after the Revolution of 1866, and expelled the reigning dynasty, a great many State and domestic papers hitherto carefully locked up in the Guelph family archives were thrown open. In Germany historians have not been slow to avail themselves of the facilities thus afforded, as the labours of Dr. Adolf Köcher, A. F. H. Schaumann, and others, abundantly testify. But in England, notwithstanding that Hanover is the cradle of our kings, and these unpublished documents have direct and personal bearing on the history of our Royal House, nothing, or practically nothing, has been done to turn them to account. They have been available for the last thirty years, yet so far no one has written an English monograph of that remarkable woman, the Electress Sophia—at least, not one worthy of the name.

In addition, therefore, to the interest of the subject, the fact that these Hanoverian papers are practically unknown to the English public forms a sufficient reason for writing this book. But apart from the papers in the Hanoverian Archives, I claim to have found other important documents which shed a new light on the mystery of Sophie Dorothea's life. The

despatches of Sir William Dutton Colt, of Cresset, Poley, and many of those of Stepney, freely quoted in this book, are now published for the first time. But more important still, and transcending all in interest, is the correspondence of Sophie Dorothea and Königsmarck. This correspondence is herein translated from the French of the original documents in the possession of the University of Lund in Sweden, and I have further edited and arranged it. It has not before been published in English, and (except for a few unimportant extracts in a Swedish book, long since out of print) has never been published in any language. My discovery of these letters three years ago suggested the idea of writing this book. To follow up the clue has involved considerable research, not only at the State Paper Office in London, but at Hanover, Brunswick, Dresden, and Lund. With a view to doing the work thoroughly, I have followed as closely as possible the footsteps of the Princess during her life. I have visited Celle, where she was born; Hanover, where she lived during her unhappy married life; and Ahlden, where, for more than thirty years, she was consigned to a living tomb. I also went to Lund in Sweden, where the letters are preserved in the library of the University, and, with the kind permission and assistance of the University authorities, carefully examined the manuscripts. Every effort has been made to render

this biography as complete as possible : it must ever remain incomplete, alas ! for some of the most valuable papers were destroyed by George I., George II., and their descendants, and the mystery around Sophie Dorothea can never be quite cleared away.

The late Miss Agnes Strickland, it is well known, brought her *Lives of the Queens of England* to an end with Queen Anne. In her preface to the final volume, written in 1848, she advances two reasons for not continuing them further. First, the lack of authentic documents and letters ; and secondly, because "personages so near our own times are not proper subjects for historical investigation." The first objection has since been obviated by the opening of the Hanoverian Archives and the discovery of other documents ; to the second it may be urged that as Miss Strickland wrote fifty years ago, her objection has lost force by the lapse of time. A princess who died nearly two centuries ago can hardly be described as "near our own times." For the rest, as the wife of one of our kings Sophie Dorothea belongs to history. There is no more impropriety in writing her life than in writing one of, say, Anne Boleyn, who also was a queen consort accused of offences which could never be proved against her, and who suffered out of all proportion to her errors. Indeed, there is even less ; for posterity has learned all it is ever likely to know about Anne Boleyn, but the secrecy

and misrepresentation with which Sophie Dorothea's memory is surrounded needs the light of impartial historical investigation. In the biographies of the unfortunate Princess hitherto given to the world, she appears either as an injured saint or a most incorrigible sinner. In point of fact she was neither, but merely a loving woman, very human, and therefore not free from faults, but far more sinned against than sinning.

A word in conclusion as to the title of this book. In writing Sophie Dorothea's life one must write of her love, since without her love her life was nothing. Of course, in the strictly legal sense, though consort of George I., she was never Queen of England any more than she was Electress of Hanover, though *de jure* she was both. But to quote Doran, Sophie Dorothea, "from the time her husband ascended the throne, was in some sort of loving sorrow called by the few left to love her, the Queen." A queen though never acknowledged, a queen though always a prisoner, a queen though never crowned—truly a queen of tears.

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# THE LOVE

OF

# AN UNCROWNED QUEEN

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## CHAPTER I

### *THE ROMANCE OF THE PRINCESS'S PARENTAGE*

> Life, like a dome of many coloured glass,
> Stains the white radiance of Eternity.
>
> SHELLEY.

SOPHIE DOROTHEA of Celle, the uncrowned Queen of the first of our Hanoverian kings came of the ancient and illustrious family of Brunswick, which was descended from Henry the Lion, Duke of Bavaria and Saxony, who, it is interesting to note, married Matilda, eldest daughter of King Henry II. of England. It is not necessary to dwell upon the glories of the House of Brunswick, but the immediate ancestry of Sophie Dorothea may be of interest.

After the Treaty of Westphalia, which was somewhat disastrous to the Brunswick princes taking part in the Thirty Years War, this family was divided into

two branches, Augustus Duke of Brunswick representing one, and Frederick Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg representing the other.

On the death of Augustus, his territories were divided amongst his three sons, with only one of whom we are concerned, Duke Antony Ulrich of Wolfenbüttel. It is necessary to mention him, as he played a not unimportant part in the life of his cousin, Sophie Dorothea of Celle. From this branch of the family the Dukes of Brunswick are descended, and it gave another uncrowned queen to England in the person of the unfortunate Caroline, consort of George IV.

Frederick Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg died in 1649, leaving the four sons of his brother, Duke George, his heirs. Of these, the eldest son, Christian Louis, was given the Sovereign Principality of Celle, then the most important; the second son, George William, subsequently the father of Sophie Dorothea, was given the Sovereign Principality of Hanover. The two younger sons, John Frederick and Ernest Augustus, had no territory at first.

When the four ducal brothers, all young men, entered upon their inheritance, changes took place in the sedate and simple Courts of Hanover and Celle. Hitherto they had been typical of the petty German Courts in the Middle Ages, untouched as yet by foreign influences. According to Vehse, at the Schloss of Celle meals were served daily in the great hall, at nine in the morning and at four in the afternoon. The retainers were summoned to meals by

a trumpeter on the tower, and if they did not appear punctually they had to go without. As they ate, a page went round "bidding every one be quiet and orderly, forbidding all swearing, and rudeness, or throwing about of bread, bones, or roast, or pocketing of the same." The butler was warned not to permit noble or simple to enter the cellar; the squires were allowed beer and "sleep-drinks," but wine was only served at the Prince's high table. All accounts were carefully kept, and bills paid weekly. The Court was one big family, and the Prince was the father of his people. But this well-ordered household was in the days of the old Duke Christian, a predecessor of the four roystering blades who now divided the possessions of Brunswick-Lüneburg.

The eldest, the young Duke Christian, settled down to a fairly quiet life at Celle; "his only fault," we hear, "was drinking," a very venal offence in those days. But the second brother, Duke George William, found life at Hanover unbearably tedious. He had little liking for the stiff and monotonous routine of his German Court; the simple lives of his subjects bored him, and their rude manners and coarse habit of living disgusted him. Though all his life strongly anti-French in his politics, he belonged to the new school of German princes and affected the society and fashions of the French, so much so that on one occasion a French envoy said to him at his own table: "But, Monseigneur, this is charming; there is no foreigner here but you." Though a young man, George William had already travelled in Italy, and

acquired a certain polish of manners and superficial refinement not usually to be found among German princes of his time. The first use he made of his freedom was to escape from the tedium of his uninteresting little Principality, and, in company with his youngest brother, Ernest Augustus, who was then his boon companion, and largely dependent upon his bounty, he made another tour in Italy, visiting Milan and Venice. At Venice, then at its zenith, the ducal brothers plunged into the delights and dissipations which the gay city offered. George William formed an intimacy with a Venetian lady, one Signora Buccolini, by whom he had a son. For many years he was devoted to her, and maintained her in considerable affluence ; for, with all his faults, he was of a generous disposition. But the lady was of so passionate, jealous, and exacting a temperament that at last she tired the patience of her protector. After many quarrels he made an arrangement by which he settled a sum of money upon the mother, and took the charge of the boy's education upon himself. This was the final separation. He took back the young Lucas Buccolini with him to Hanover, clipped his Italian name into Bucco, or Buccow, and found him a place in his household.[1]

George William's subjects did not appreciate these frequent absences of their liege lord, nor did they

[1] On attaining to man's estate, this youth filled the office of Master of the Horse at the Court of Celle; later he became a colonel of the dragoons. He seems to have been of a jealous disposition, and was always grumbling because his putative father did not enough for him.

approve of the Italian singers and dancers and the Venetian son whom he brought back with him to his prim little Court. They became exceedingly restive, and pointed out that there was need of a duchess and an heir. Duke Christian of Celle was unwed, and Duke George William of Hanover, who was next in succession, was a bachelor too. Their subjects, both of Celle and Hanover, considered this a neglect of duty on the part of their princes, and, remonstrances having no avail, at last the members of the State in Hanover threatened to cut short George William's allowance if he did not marry forthwith. Moreover, knowing his predilections, they intimated plainly that they wished no foreign bride, and suggested that the Princess Sophia, the orphan daughter of the luckless Frederick Prince Palatine, ex-King of Bohemia (by the beautiful Elizabeth, daughter of James I. of England), would be a suitable duchess.

The Princess Sophia was well past her first youth, and was understood to be anxious to settle herself in life. She was then living with her brother, the Elector Palatine of the Rhenish provinces, at Heidelberg, as State governess to his children. The household was not a happy one, for the Elector and his wife were leading a cat-and-dog life, and Sophia's lot, as a poor relation, was hardly enviable. She was a healthy little body, decidedly good-looking, though she had not inherited the beauty of her mother "The Queen of Hearts." "My hair," she writes, "was light brown and in natural curls; my general appearance gay and lightsome;

my figure good, but not very tall; my deportment that of a princess. I take no pleasure in remembering all the rest, of which my mirror shows me nothing left." She had sharp wits and a sharp tongue, and the life she had led, knocking about Europe in the poverty-stricken Court of the Queen of Bohemia, had developed both to an unusual degree. Yet notwithstanding the financial troubles of her youth, "my spirits," she continues, "were so high in those days that everything amused me; the misfortunes of my house were unable to depress them, although at times we had to make repasts richer than Cleopatra's, and nothing was eaten at Court but pearls and diamonds." This is one of Sophia's figures of speech, for it is to be feared that the pearls and diamonds had long since gone to the Jews. Despite her poverty, or perhaps in consequence of it, Sophia was inordinately proud of her birth, especially her English ancestry, on which she was never tired of expatiating. At one time she had been put forward as a suitable wife for her first cousin, the Prince of Wales, afterwards Charles II. of England, and with that view had been carefully trained in the English language and English ways. The match fell through, and so, in the after years, did many others, some good, some indifferent, which had been projected for her by her relations. As Sophia was very ambitious, the failure of her matrimonial chances was a great disappointment to her. She was now twenty-nine, and her good looks were somewhat impaired by an attack of small-pox; she was therefore quite ready to meet the husband

whom the Hanoverians had proposed for her, half way.

George William, seeing that his subjects' minds were made up, shrugged his shoulders and submitted to the inevitable. If it had to be, Sophia would do as well as any other. He therefore started for Heidelberg, on the way to his beloved Venice, accompanied again by his brother, Ernest Augustus. Without ado he proposed for Sophia's hand, and she "did not at all hesitate to say *Yes*," as she admits in her autobiography. He made no pretence to any affection, and she required none. A marriage contract was drawn up and duly signed, with the single proviso that the betrothal should not be made public for a little time.

The business having been settled, George William hurried on to Venice, and revelled in his brief spell of freedom. But his approaching marriage hung over him like a pall; he thought over the matter, and one morning he came to the conclusion that after all he could not take upon himself the restraints of matrimony with a woman for whom he had not a particle of affection. The situation was difficult, for if he did not wed her his subjects were determined to reduce his income, and to the pleasure-loving Duke this was an equally unpleasant alternative. In this dilemma he bethought himself of Ernest Augustus, his youngest brother, and suggested to him that he should act as his substitute. All that his subjects wanted was an heir, and with this Ernest Augustus would be able to furnish them, through Sophia, as well as he.

Ernest Augustus was nothing loth to take his brother's place—for a consideration. He was favourably disposed towards the Princess, with whom he had flirted in his youth; they had met at the Hague and had played the guitar together, but as he was a younger son, Sophia had nipped the flirtation in the bud. A deed was drawn up between the two brothers, in which George William undertook to surrender certain of his revenues, and bound himself not to marry, so as to leave his inheritance and all his rights to the brother who would act as substitute for him in the matter of his intended bride and ducal obligations. Just as the contract was signed the other impecunious brother, John Frederick, came into the room, and, on learning its contents, fell into a rage because the chance had not been offered to him first; he tried to tear away the document from Ernest Augustus, George William looking on with amusement. This happy-go-lucky way of choosing a bride was quite in keeping with the traditions of the House of Brunswick; an ancestor of these princes cast dice with his seven brothers for a wife on somewhat similar conditions, and won the prize—a princess of Hesse-Darmstadt.

The next thing was to acquaint the Princess Sophia with the arrangement; that lady, having satisfied herself that the terms of the agreement were equally advantageous to her and her heirs, raised no objection to being handed over like a bale of goods, and though her pride was hurt she skilfully concealed her resentment. Her brother, the Elector Palatine, glad to get rid of her and her sharp tongue, told her that he thought

THE ELECTRESS SOPHIA. [*To face p.* 8.

(*At the time of her marriage.*)

she was better for the change of brothers, a remark with which she agreed, adding that, "A good establishment is all *I* care for, and if this is secured to the younger brother, the change is a matter of indifference."

These negotiations from first to last took two years; in September, 1658, the marriage was celebrated with some pomp at Heidelberg, and in November the Duchess Sophia took up her abode at Hanover, where she was the first lady in the land, and treated with every honour. She was always a great stickler for etiquette, and insisted on every tittle of the respect due to her rank and illustrious ancestry. Curiously enough, if we may believe her memoirs, no sooner was she married to Ernest Augustus than George William became attracted to her, thereby arousing the jealousy of her husband, until she begged the elder brother "for the love of God," to leave her in peace.

In 1660 her eldest son, George Louis (afterwards George I. of England), was born at Osnabrück, and the arrival of the much-wished-for heir increased her importance. The following year Ernest Augustus succeeded to the bishopric of Osnabrück,[1] and Sophia's prospects were the more improved.

[1] Osnabrück was a see founded by Charlemagne. Luther had many followers among the citizens, and at the Treaty of Westphalia, 1648, which was concluded at Osnabrück, it was arranged that the Prince Bishop should be alternately a Lutheran and a Roman Catholic, the selection of the bishop being left with the chapter, restricted, however, to the family of Brunswick-Lüneburg. This arrangement resulted in some very odd bishops. The last member of the English Royal Family to hold the title was the Duke of York, son of George III., the Queen's uncle.

Meantime George William had overcome his belated *penchant* for Sophia, if indeed it ever existed save in her imagination, and was gratifying his pleasure-loving soul by making a tour of many cities. Among others, he went to Breda, at the end of the seventeenth century an exceedingly gay place, albeit money was somewhat lacking there. It was the chosen home of political refugees, exiled princes, and deposed monarchs, who kept up their spirits despite their fallen fortunes, and maintained phantom Courts on nothing a year. Here Charles II. dwelt for some time in his exile with many celebrated cavaliers ; here, too, his aunt, the Queen of Bohemia, had held her shadowy Court ; here, too, was concluded the peace between England and Holland. All these things contributed to the importance and the gaiety of Breda ; there were feasts, masquerades, and revelries, and plays with after-suppers and dances. Among the gayest of the gay was the Princess de Tarente, an aunt of the Duchess Sophia, a German princess who had married a French prince. One of her most cherished *protégées* was Eléonore d'Olbreuse, only child of the Marquis d'Olbreuse, a nobleman of ancient family, of Poitou. He was one of the many French Huguenots who, after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, were persecuted by the Government of Louis XIV. As he would not recant, his estates were confiscated, he was sent into exile, and found an asylum in Holland.

Before the persecution of the Huguenot nobles Eléonore d'Olbreuse had figured at the brilliant Court of Louis XIV., where she was greatly admired for her

wit and beauty. She was endowed with an exquisite figure, dark brown hair, regular features, and a brilliant complexion. At this time she was in the first bloom of youth, and her loveliness was only equalled by her sprightliness and charm of manner.[1] George William met her at a ball at the Princess de Tarente's, and being of an amorous, though not of a marrying disposition, he fell in love at first sight. He became a constant visitor at the Princess de Tarente's, and a closer acquaintance with the accomplishments and graces of the bewitching Eléonore only served to rivet his chains. He affected a great zeal to perfect his French, and the fair Eléonore willingly consented to give the good-looking Duke lessons, thereby offering fine opportunities for flirtation. What progress George William made with the French language is not recorded, but in the art of love there is no doubt he made rapid advances, for after a few lessons in the conjugation of the verb *aimer*, he avowed his passion in most extravagant terms, and swore that he could not live without her. He found that the citadel did not yield to the first attack. Eléonore d'Olbreuse was of a very different calibre to Signora Buccolini ; she had only two available assets, her beauty and her virtue, and she was well aware of the value of both. She was not versed in the *menue galanterie* of the Court of the Grand Monarque for nothing. George William was fervent in his protestations, prodigal in his promises

[1] There is a portrait of her, dressed in a blue robe, in the Guelph Museum at Hanover, as she was in middle life—a beautiful woman, with masses of dark brown hair and a superb figure.

of devotion, and what was more to the purpose, most liberal in his proposals as to settlements ; but Eléonore held firm. Her birth was noble, though not royal, and, despite her poverty, she held that a French marquis of ancient descent was not so very inferior to a petty German prince. George William could not be expected to take this view, for, though indifferent to the trappings of rank, he, like all German princes, was inclined to over-estimate his own importance. But he could not give her up ; he who had been accustomed to command in love was now its humblest supplicant ; he who was indolent, easy-going in temperament, now developed an ardour and determination altogether foreign to him ; he who was slow of speech now became most eloquent in the language of love. Eléonore had worked a transformation. So infatuated was he that he would willingly have married her then and there but for the document he had signed when the marriage was arranged between Ernest Augustus and Sophia. Eléonore knew nothing of this arrangement, but she positively refused to entertain any proposals short of marriage.

In this dilemma George William thought of a morganatic marriage,[1] and offered handsome settlements. The Princess de Tarente advised her friend to yield. The Marquis d'Olbreuse put no pressure on his daughter ; but she was well aware of the straits to

[1] A marriage *ad morganaticum*, sanctioned by the Church, but so far disallowed by law that the children of such wedlock were *infantes nullius*, and could succeed to no inheritance. This sorry expedient had been frequently resorted to by George William's ancestors, and afterwards by his descendants—princes of the House

which poverty had reduced him, and could see that in his heart he favoured the Duke's suit. If she consented she would secure for her father a comfortable provision for his declining years. Eléonore, too, was really in love with George William; but still she held back.

To bring matters to a climax, the Princess de Tarente gave a brilliant entertainment in honour of the birthday of her friend and *protégée*, when she presented her with a jewelled medallion of her lover. The result seemed inevitable, for she who hesitates is lost; when suddenly couriers came hot-foot from Celle with the news that George William's elder brother, Christian, was dead, and his younger brother, John Frederick, who owed him a grudge for having been cheated out of Sophia, had seized on the Castle of Celle and established himself in the Duchy. George William had to post in haste to Celle to uphold his rights and turn out the usurper, but before leaving Breda he placed a paper in the hands of his beloved Eléonore, in which she found that he had settled on her, in the event of his death, the whole of his private fortune with the exception of a few legacies.

It took some time for George William to arrange things satisfactorily at Celle; but at last he persuaded John Frederick to relinquish the Duchy, and gave him compensation, for his frequent absences had weakened

of Hanover. One of the last of these marriages was that of the Duke of Sussex with Lady Augusta Murray. It seems absurd that this should have been morganatic, considering that Lady Augusta was descended from our oldest and proudest nobility and had Stuart blood in her veins.

his rights. George William then became Duke of Celle, and John Frederick succeeded to Hanover, Ernest Augustus remaining Bishop of Osnabrück.

When affairs of State were settled satisfactorily George William's thoughts once more turned to love. But there were many difficulties. He could not leave his dominions so soon, he could not return to Breda to see the object of his affections; while she, on her part, refused all entreaties to come to him. In this dilemma he confided in his sister-in-law, the Duchess Sophia, of whose judgment he had great admiration. Sophia sympathised, softened, doubtless, by one of those little presents whereby George William was in the habit of buying the complaisance of the Court at Osnabrück, and promised to see the affair through, provided that nothing were done to impair her rights. It could hardly have been a congenial task to Sophia, and her jealousy showed itself early by her scoffing at Eléonore's airs of virtue, which she declared were only assumed to increase her value. But she was not one to allow sentiment to stand in the way of substantial benefit. Sophia's prospects had again distinctly improved by the death of Duke Christian. John Frederick was still unwed, and likely to remain so[1]; and if she could tie George William down to an amour without legitimate heirs, in the fulness of time she or her children might reign not only at Osnabrück, but also at Hanover and Celle. So the illustrious Duchess Sophia, the descendant of kings, the great lady of Osnabrück,

[1] He married later, 1668, but his wife brought him no children.

wrote a dissembling letter to poor exiled Eléonore, asking her to come, assuring her of respect, and offering her as a pretext the post of lady-in-waiting at her Court. Eléonore still hesitated. She was very proud and very poor ; but she was very much in love, and wearied with importunities. The Duchess wrote again, even more urgently. These attentions from one who was known everywhere as a great Princess flattered Eléonore's pride, and the prospect of joining her lover gratified her love. She consented and came.

Eléonore was received with every mark of respect. Sophia, accompanied by George William, met her at the foot of the grand staircase of the castle. She was led up to the Duchess's own chamber, where coffee and salt biscuits, an unusual honour, were offered to her, and she was then conducted to her apartments. No one could be more affable than the Duchess ; everything seemed straightforward, and it is no wonder that Eléonore, a stranger in a strange land, was outwitted. She soon found that she could not draw back without compromising her reputation, so she yielded to advice, not altogether reluctantly, and accepted at last the left-handed marriage offered her. A contract was drawn up, worded almost as if it were a regular marriage ; but carefully guarding the rights of Sophia, her husband, and her children; and the signatures of Ernest Augustus and Sophia were written under those of George William of Celle and Eléonore d'Olbreuse. After the ceremony, which took place in September, 1665, Eléonore was granted the

title of Madame von Harburg, so called from an estate of the Duke's, and her nominal place of lady-in-waiting was filled by her sister Angelica, whom she later married to the Comte de Reuss.

In her memoirs Sophia declares that at first she was agreeably surprised to find Eléonore a very amiable person, of modest and even retiring manners, and she no doubt thought she would be easily kept in her place —not a high one. She soon found herself mistaken. For some months after the morganatic marriage Eléonore continued to live in the household of the Duchess Sophia, and was not treated with any great honour, and certainly not admitted to an equality of rank. For instance, at meal-times she did not take her place at the ducal table, and had to sit on a low chair, without anything to eat, at a respectful distance from the Duchess Sophia and Dukes George William and Ernest Augustus, who ate their food while Madame von Harburg looked on. But she was allowed to remain seated when any princes were present, and this was considered a great concession. Her pride was much hurt at this etiquette, nor did the heavy living and coarse manners of the German Court appeal to her finer tastes. In her interesting letters to her uncle she complains that "her heart was sadly turned" by the enormous dishes brought before the princely eaters, their *menu* consisting chiefly of greasy sausages thrown in lumps on red cabbage, and a farinaceous mass of ginger and onions. This was washed down by cloudy, heavy ale, of which they drank freely. "Now," the Duchess Sophia would

exclaim after she had eaten her fill, mopping her face with a napkin, "you may go, my dear, and help your 'angelic' sister with her saucepans." This was a jeer at the habit of Eléonore and Angelica preparing for themselves a little meal after the French *cuisine* in their dressing-rooms.

Madame von Harburg was not stinted in her establishment; she was allowed a chariot drawn by six horses, but she was never seen abroad with the Duchess Sophia or the Bishop of Osnabrück. She was not, however, a lady content with the second place, and as her influence with her husband was great, and grew greater as his love increased, she had little difficulty in persuading him to take her away with him to the Schloss at Celle, where she was safe from the patronage of the Duchess Sophia and could develop on her own lines. George William was glad to take up his abode at the capital of his Duchy, and, thanks to his morganatic wife, he abandoned his roving habits and settled down as a model duke, making plans for the improvement of his castle and the better government of his people.

After they had been a few months at Celle, Eléonore set the seal on her influence with her husband by presenting him with a daughter—Sophie Dorothea.

## CHAPTER II

### *THE PROGRESS OF ELÉONORE*

(1666—1676)

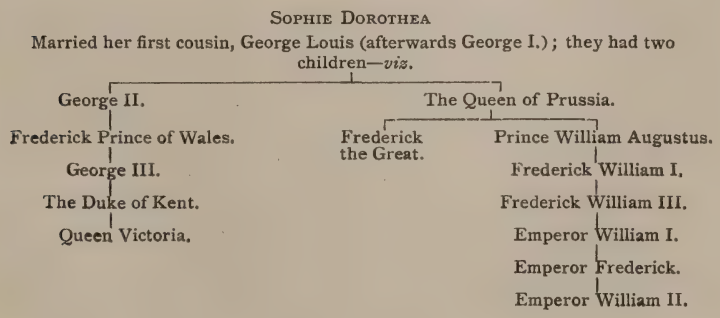
> Oh, were I seated high as my ambition,
> I'd place this naked foot on necks of monarchs!
>
> WALPOLE.

SOPHIE DOROTHEA was born in the Castle of Celle on September 15, 1666. On the anniversary of her birth two hundred and thirty-two years later it chanced that the writer visited Celle. It must have been on just such a September morning that Sophie Dorothea was born, with the sun blazing down on the yellow-washed walls and shining into the chamber where the birth-bed was, with the limes and silver beeches in the garden flecked with the gold of autumn, and the blue-green reeds waving on the edge of the sluggish moat. The fine old Schloss had changed little with the flight of centuries. The drawbridge and portcullis had gone; but the moat, filled with water from the Aller, still flowed dully about the walls, separated from them only by a strip of garden. The great courtyard, with its high yellow walls, timeworn sundial, and pyramid of cannon-balls in one corner (doubtless the spoil of one of George

William's many campaigns), even the flock of white and purple pigeons fluttering down on the rough stones, all seemed to breathe the spirit of the seventeenth century. And looking up at the north wing, where Sophie Dorothea was born, it required little effort of the imagination to people again the deserted courtyard with lackeys and squires, to conjure up the clatter of hoofs and the clank of spurs, the bustle of congratulation, the arrival and departure of messengers and doctors, all of which signified to the little town of Celle that a daughter was born to the head of the great house of Brunswick-Lüneburg, and, though they knew it not, an ancestress to two of the mightiest monarchs of the modern world—the Queen of England and the German Emperor.[1]

The little town of Celle, at least that part of it which clusters around the base of the castle's mighty walls, has also changed little since the days of Sophie Dorothea. The old brick church where the babe of that bright morning now sleeps with her fathers

[1] Short genealogical table showing descent of Queen Victoria and the Emperor William II. from SOPHIE DOROTHEA of Celle.



remains the same. The triangular market-place and the quaint little streets which branch off from it, many of them narrow and irregular, bear the marks of the flight of centuries. The old part of the town still stands with houses dated 1609 to 1700, having outer beams carved with curious and uncouth mottoes. Celle, though a fairly prosperous town, has not shot ahead like Hanover. But in those days Celle, with its magnificent Schloss, the seat of the elder brother's Duchy, was a place of considerable importance. It was a veritable Naboth's vineyard to Ernest Augustus and Sophia, his spouse, who, from their little Court at Osnabrück, looked towards it with longing eyes.

The news of the birth of a daughter was not welcome to them, but they consoled themselves with the thought that the child was the fruit of a morganatic union, and, after they had cracked a few coarse jokes, dismissed the subject from their minds. But they were soon reminded rather rudely. The infant was given the names of Sophie Dorothea, and the christening was celebrated with much ceremony and many festivities and rejoicings. Ernest Augustus angrily remarked that if the infant had been a princess instead of only the daughter of his brother's *madame*, they could not have made more fuss about it; and that was true, for, from the first moment Sophie Dorothea drew breath, though in strict law she was a person of no importance, expressly excluded from holding any rank at Celle, the same honours were paid to her as if she had been the heiress to the Duchy.

THE CASTLE OF CELLE.

[*To face p.* 20.

From this time onward the rift between the Duchess Sophia and Eléonore gradually widened into an open feud. As long as she had to think only of herself Eléonore had borne patiently Sophia's insults and humiliations; but now that a child was born, she determined to spare no effort to raise herself and her daughter to a recognised position. She played her part with consummate skill. She had to fight against not merely the uncompromising hostility of Ernest Augustus and the jealous hatred of his Duchess, but the forces of custom and precedence which bind the petty German Courts with an iron band. She had to beat down the jealousy and prejudice against herself as an alien and a stranger, and win the support and recognition not only of her husband's subjects, but of the neighbouring princes, and even of the Emperor himself. When we consider the forces against her, we are lost in admiration of the courage, patience, and sagacity of this woman, who year after year never swerved from the end she had in view, and at last found her efforts crowned with success.

Success did not come in a night. It took Eléonore ten years before she obtained the object of her desire—ten years of constant effort; for her arch-enemy and rival, the Duchess Sophia, was ever on the alert to check her moves and foil her plans. One great advantage Eléonore had at this time, she was sure of her husband's love; and as George William was as easy-going at his wife was energetic, and as contented as she was ambitious, she soon managed to gain a

mastery over him—the mastery of a strong mind over a weak one. Her next duty was to cultivate the arts of popularity and win the good will of her husband's subjects, no easy matter, for the prejudice against "the Frenchwoman" and morganatic wife was strong in the little German Principality. But her tact and affability soon won her golden opinions in Celle. From the first she seemed to take the townsfolk into her confidence; she drove about the town with her infant daughter, radiant with bows and smiles, and soon the inhabitants began to regard the little one as their own child, and to be as jealous of her rights as they were of their own. This devotion of the honest townsfolk of Celle to Sophie Dorothea never wavered, but lasted all through her life.

Not content with sowing the seeds of her child's popularity in her infancy, Eléonore used other means to endear herself to her husband's subjects. At her instigation Duke George William proceeded to restore the old Schloss on a scale of considerable magnificence, taking care always to employ local workmen. The little theatre[1] in the castle, so long unused, was opened

[1] The theatre is in the old part of the Palace at Celle, approached by vaulted, stone corridors, with walls five feet thick, and has a large stage and a number of little boxes, the Royal box of course occupying a position of prominence. The decorations are simple; most of the theatre is whitewashed. Like the rest of the Castle of Celle, it has changed little, though the castle has witnessed many changes. On the death of George William, the castle passed into the possession of George I., and through him to successive kings of England. On the accession of Queen Victoria, the Schloss became the property of the King of Hanover, Ernest Augustus (Duke of Cumberland), who altered it somewhat inside, not for the better, and it remained

again for plays and musical performances, and to these entertainments gentle and simple were bidden, and seated according to their rank. Thus, after many years, a lady was once more *châtelaine* at the Schloss of Celle, and again there might be said to be a Court there.

George William warmly seconded all these efforts of his wife, and so great was his love for her and the little child that his one idea seemed to be how best to advance their interests. The rival Court of Osnabrück, queened over by the descendant of kings, regarded all these innovations and the "mock Court" at Celle with open ridicule yet concealed uneasiness. Sophia was presenting her husband with a numerous family, and she was anxious that nothing should be done to prejudice the rights of her offspring.[1]

Ernest Augustus held the security of his brother's

in the possession of the Royal Family of Hanover until the Revolution of 1866, when it was seized, together with other Hanoverian possessions, by Prussia, and merged into the Province of Brunswick. For some time it was used as one of the summer palaces of the present Prince Regent of Brunswick; but he never goes there now, and the Schloss is almost dismantled of furniture, but well kept and in perfect order.

[1] Table showing descent of Sophia from James I. of England, and her children:

James I.
Queen of Bohemia.
Sophia m. Ernest Augustus (afterward Elector of Hanover).

| George Louis, b. 1660, d. 1727 (afterward George I. of England), m. Sophie Dorothea of Celle. | Frederick Augustus, b. 1661, d. 1691. | Maximilian William, b. 1666, d. 1726. | Sophia Charlotte (Electress of Brandenburg and Queen of Prussia), b. 1668, d. 1705. | Charles Philip, b. 1671, d. 1703. | Christian, b. 1671, d. 1703. | Ernest Augustus, b. 1674, d. 1728. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

promise not to enter into a legal marriage, and believed in it implicitly; but he naturally asked himself to what end Eléonore was working? He heard much of George William's boundless generosity to his morganatic wife, and he liked not the diversion of his private property from what he thought its proper direction, to wit, himself.

Within the next few years Eléonore bore her husband three more daughters, but they all died in infancy, and Sophie Dorothea remained the spoiled darling of her father's affections. So devoted was he to the child that the mother's influence grew day by day; and when the little girl was five years old, George William, knowing that by his thoughtless contract with Ernest Augustus he had shut out his wife and daughter from all succession to his dominions, began to purchase land to bequeath as he pleased. To this end he bought five domains, and settled them upon Eléonore and Sophie Dorothea, so as to make provision for them in case of his death. But even this reasonable arrangement was not carried through without a bribe to satisfy Ernest Augustus, who would only tolerate his brother's liberality to his wife and daughter on the understanding that he received a handsome commission for himself. This was the first marked step in the progress of Eléonore, and a little later she sounded the Emperor about the possibility of legitimising Sophie Dorothea. The Emperor returned a favourable, if somewhat guarded, reply; it was evident she could obtain her heart's desire if she could manage to pay the price. We find

her, therefore, instigating George William to send troops to help the Emperor in sundry campaigns. This was done, and George William so distinguished himself that the Emperor received him in private audience, and most graciously inquired after his "Duchess," pretending not to know the true state of affairs.

The Emperor's condescension reached the ears of the Duchess Sophia, and the embers of her jealousy burst into a blaze. Eléonore's conduct was a model of wifely devotion; so, as the Duchess Sophia could not bring any charge against her after her marriage, she raked up some old slander, and accused her publicly of having simultaneously carried on two intrigues when she was at the Court of Louis XIV. She represented her as a designing adventuress, who, while doing her best to marry Colin, a page-in-waiting of Elizabeth Charlotte Duchess d'Orleans, tried to catch George William as the bigger match of the two. These charges were not very damaging or convincing, but malice went further. We find the Duchess Sophia writing to her niece, the Duchess d'Orleans: "Never would any respectable girl have entered the house of the Princess de Tarente, for, though she is my aunt—to my intense disgust—she is not a person with whom any one can live and remain clean. However," she added, "d'Olbreuse being a nobody, it does not matter much." George William treated the tale about the intrigue with the contempt it deserved, but the statement that his wife was "a nobody" seems to have rankled; so he and his lady thought of a very

poor means of defence. They paid two thousand thalers to a French genealogist to make out an elaborate family tree, to prove that Eléonore d'Olbreuse was descended in an almost direct line from the kings of France. The Duchess Sophia received the pedigree with scorn and derision, and transmitted it to the Duchess d'Orleans, who, being somewhat of a wit, made out a caricature, in which she clearly showed that her head cook was a descendant of Philip the Bold. Naturally these tactics did not tend to smooth matters between Sophia and Eléonore, who were now not on speaking terms, nor were they successful in winning George William from the object of his affections. Manlike, the more his wife was attacked the more he defended her; and Eléonore, who had her share of vanity, was so upset and wounded by being thus flouted that she became quite ill, and had to take a cure at Pyrmont, then a fashionable watering-place, to restore her health. George William was worried, too, and by way of a consolation he purchased for Eléonore another and yet more valuable estate, including the fertile island of Wilhelmsburg, in the Elbe, near Hamburg. This he settled upon her for life, and made arrangements for it to become, after her death, the inheritance of Sophie Dorothea. Again Ernest Augustus protested, and again he was bought off, this time with a bribe of eighteen thousand thalers. But all the same, the victory remained with Eléonore. If she could not get the genealogy, at least she had substantial consolation. The possession of a property like the island of Wilhelmsburg

naturally aroused comment, not only at Osnabrück, but the neighbouring Courts. It was regarded as open evidence of Eléonore's influence; she became a person of consequence outside the little circle of Celle, and all the German princes began to wonder what would happen next.

They were not left long in doubt. A few months later the mighty Emperor sent to the Court of Celle the letters patent which granted the legitimising of Sophie Dorothea, and gave the title of Countess of Wilhelmsburg to Eléonore. If the memoirs of the time are to be believed, this Imperial message came as a surprise even to George William, who, though evidently pleased, looked askance at his Eléonore and grunted, "Hum, hum!" as though he fathomed the source whence the Imperial condescension sprang. He was right, for the support which Eléonore had given to the Emperor in influencing her husband to send troops to the campaign, and a charming letter she had written to him, had won the Emperor over to her side, and he had graciously acceded to her desire.

The next few years went by uneventfully. It seemed to the outside world that Eléonore was resting on her laurels, but in reality she was working for more. Meanwhile Sophie Dorothea was growing up a lovely child, petted and spoiled by her parents and the Court of Celle. There is a picture of her, painted about this time, in the Cumberland Gallery at Herrenhausen, the portrait of a beautiful child crowned with flowers and holding a great bundle of blossoms in her arms—a happy, winsome, radiant face; and, making allowance

for the flattery of Court painters, it is certain that she must have been exceptionally lovely. The knowledge that the little girl was to inherit a large fortune made rumour already begin to find her a husband among the scions of the nobility. Among Sophie Dorothea's playmates in the gardens of Celle was a handsome youth of some sixteen years, Count Philip Christopher von Königsmarck, son of a wealthy Swedish noble. The youthful Königsmarck was receiving his military training at Celle, and was staying there for a few years. It was not unusual at that time for a soldier to be trained in different Courts and serve in various campaigns, and so acquire a thorough knowledge of warfare. Count Philip came of a family with a brilliant military record. His father had held the office of Minister-General of Artillery in the service of the King of Sweden ; his uncle, Count Otho William, was a marshal in the service of Louis XIV., and at the Court of the Grand Monarque became acquainted with Eléonore d'Olbreuse. He was a Huguenot like herself. This acquaintance probably formed the link which brought his nephew to Celle. Eléonore, though popular among her husband's subjects, was devoted to the land of her birth ; she was always "the Frenchwoman," and was fond of appointing her compatriots to little places in her husband's Court, thereby causing some small jealousies.

There is no doubt that the boy and girl were thrown together, and a friendship sprang up between them ; but at Sophie Dorothea's age we can hardly suppose that there was any deeper affection, though Königs-

marck, for his part (and he was older), afterwards avowed that he had loved her from childhood. At the most they could only have been boy and girl playing at lovers. Count Philip, as we have seen, came of a distinguished family, even in his boyhood he was endowed with great personal beauty, and he was known to be heir to considerable wealth. Sophie Dorothea was an heiress, too, and she was then far removed from the rank of a princess. The possibility of a match between the two was not so remote as might have been imagined—at any rate their names were linked together even at that early period in the little Court of Celle.

It is scarcely likely that Eléonore, Countess of Wilhelmsburg, shared these views for her daughter—in fact, we know that she looked higher. Among the neighbouring German princes who had watched with benevolent interest the progress of Eléonore was Duke Antony Ulrich of Wolfenbüttel,[1] a cousin of George William, who later became co-regent with his brother, Rudolph Augustus, of the Duchy of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel. He was a prince of considerable talents and artistic and literary gifts, a restless spirit always intriguing. He was a plain man, so plain that the Duchess d'Orleans called him "an ugly baboon." He early noted the great influence Eléonore had obtained over her slow, easy-going husband. He

[1] Wolfenbüttel is an old town on the Oker, not far from Brunswick. The famous library contains Luther's Bible, and the ducal Schloss and mortuary chapel are the only other buildings worth mentioning. The seat of the Duchy was, however, at Brunswick.

disliked the Bishop of Osnabrück and he knew of the Duchess Sophia's hatred of Eléonore. He was aware of the arrangement that had been made between the two brothers as to the succession to the Duchy, but nevertheless he thought it would be a good thing if he could manage to divert some of the wealth of the fat little Principality of Celle into his somewhat empty coffers. With this end in view he paid a visit to the Court of Celle, and treated Eléonore with every possible respect; in fact, he seems to have been genuinely impressed with her virtue and talents, and this homage, coming from a neighbouring prince, was grateful to Eléonore's self-esteem, for she was sensitive about her somewhat equivocal position. She recognised in him an ally, and laid the foundations of a friendship which lasted through life.

After an interval, Duke Antony Ulrich came again to Celle, this time accompanied by his eldest son, Augustus Frederick. He communicated to Eléonore his wishes that his son should be betrothed to ophie Dorothea, and she was nothing loth. But he pointed out that there was a difficulty, in that Sophie Dorothea was not a princess, and so could not make a regular marriage with his son. The way to overcome this obstacle was for George William to legally marry Eléonore, and raise her to the rank of duchess, and by this means Sophie Dorothea would become a princess, and equal in rank with Augustus Frederick. This reasoning was very grateful to Eléonore, for it showed the way to the goal of her ambition. She willingly agreed to work with Antony

Ulrich for this object, and they took into their confidence a councillor named Schütz. Thus a distinct party was formed at Celle opposed to the interests of the Bishop of Osnabrück and in favour of those of Wolfenbüttel. For this the Duchess Sophia was largely to blame; she had so insulted and humiliated Eléonore that she had thrown herself into the rival camp. George William was so much under his wife's influence that he readily agreed to support her desire to become his Duchess, especially when his cousin and neighbour, Duke Antony Ulrich, told him she was in every way worthy of the position, and it was a reproach to him that he had not espoused her as his legal wife long before. He also viewed with favour the betrothal of Sophie Dorothea to Augustus Frederick, to which this was an indispensable preliminary. Everything was quickly arranged, and it was resolved to petition the Emperor. He was already friendly to Eléonore, and when her prayers were backed up by the powerful support of the Dukes of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel and her husband, they were sure to be granted.

The news of this double event soon reached Osnabrück and struck consternation into the hearts of Ernest Augustus and his wife. The Duchess Sophia was beside herself with rage, and wrote to tell the news to her niece, Elizabeth Charlotte d'Orleans. "We shall soon have to say 'Madame la Duchesse,'" she exclaimed, "to this little clot of dirt, for is there another name for that mean *intrigante* who comes from nowhere?" To which Elizabeth Charlotte replied:

"Nowhere? My dear aunt, you are mistaken, if you will allow me to say so; she comes from a French family, and therefore from a fraud." But these feminine amenities, like the Bishop's protests, were unavailing; and soon Ernest Augustus and Sophia arrived at the conclusion that, as it was too late to prevent the mischief, the only thing remaining was to safeguard their interests as closely as possible. A fresh agreement was drawn up, lawyers and parchments were brought forth, and the contract between the two brothers was debated and fought out, clause by clause, like a Bill in Committee. The heckling took many months and bore fruit in many documents. The result of the controversy was at last summarised in a document duly signed by Duke George William, the Bishop of Osnabrück, and Duke Antony Ulrich of Wolfenbüttel. The agreement was signed at Celle in May, 1676, and its main clauses may be summarised as follows:

Duke George William was allowed to "enter into Christian matrimony with the high-born lady Eléonore von Harburg, Countess of Wilhelmsburg"; and his daughter Sophie Dorothea, "promised to wife to His Serene Highness Augustus Frederick Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel," was to bear the title and arms of a princess by birth of Brunswick-Lüneburg. But a clause was added: "Any other children who may be hereafter born in this wedlock must content themselves with the titles of Counts and Countesses of Wilhelmsburg, and they can make no pretences to the succession to the Duchy, which is bestowed on

Ernest Augustus Bishop of Osnabrück and his heirs male."

The unfairness of this clause is patent; but it was somewhat modified by the fact that it was extremely unlikely Eléonore would bear her husband any more children. The Emperor's assent was proclaimed with some ceremony; a convocation of the deputies of the Principality was then assembled, and their agreement with the treaty duly notified. When all the legal preliminaries were over, George William led his morganatic wife of eleven years to the altar, and espoused her with much pomp and solemnity before all his Court, his cousin Antony Ulrich, and the little Sophie Dorothea, who must have wondered what it was all about. Ernest Augustus and Sophia were not present at these festivities, and they dissembled their ire as best they could. "Ah!" exclaimed the Bishop to his Court at Osnabrück on the night of the marriage, "my brother's French *madame* is not a jot the more his wife for being his Duchess; but she hath a dignity the more, and therewith may madame rest content." The jibe was duly reported to the Court of Celle; but Eléonore did not feel its sting. She had reached the summit of her ambition; she was the acknowledged consort of the sovereign of Celle; her child was ranked as princess and betrothed to a prince of equal rank. As Ernest Augustus had said, she could now afford to rest content.

## CHAPTER III

### *THE WISDOM OF SERPENTS*

(1676—1681)

Some rise by sin, and some by virtue fall.
SHAKSPEARE.

THE sun of Eléonore's triumph had no sooner reached its meridian than its radiance began to be overcast. The first cloud was the death of the young Prince Augustus Frederick of Wolfenbüttel, who was killed by a cannon-ball at the siege of Phillipsburg a few months after his betrothal to Sophie Dorothea. His death, though it seemed comparatively unimportant, was destined to exercise an evil influence over the fortunes of the House of Celle, and it snapped the strongest band of union between the Celle-Wolfenbüttel party. The child Princess was happily unconscious of her loss. The betrothal was merely a matter of policy, to take effect later ; the courtship was yet to come ; and when the tidings came to Celle of the death of her betrothed she was too young to mourn him.

At first the Prince's death affected but little the *entente* between the Courts of Celle and Wolfenbüttel. Duke Antony Ulrich continued the close friend of Eléonore ; he had another son, more nearly the age of

Sophie Dorothea, and he held him in reserve ; for the hour of a fresh arrangement was not yet, and other plans were in the air.

Meanwhile the little Princess blossomed into lovely girlhood, the spoiled darling of her father's Court. She was trained in all the accomplishments suitable to her rank, but the more solid part of her education seems to have been neglected, and with the promise of great beauty she early developed a passion for admiration which lasted all her life. Now that she was a princess her mother was careful to keep her away from all suitors not of equal rank. The early intimacy between the handsome young Königsmarck and Sophie Dorothea was broken off, and Königsmarck was given a hint to leave Celle. He repaired to England to finish his education, and he and the Princess did not meet again for many years, and by that time she was a wife and the mother of two children. Eléonore was justified of her wisdom, for when Sophie Dorothea was scarcely more than twelve years old her aunt, the Countess de Reuss, found in a drawer of the little Princess's *bonheur du jour* a love-letter from a Court page. The boy was banished for his audacity into lifelong exile, and the governess, whose connivance was responsible, was first imprisoned and then sent away in disgrace. The news of this affair, which was but a childish folly after all, got bruited abroad, and reached the ears of the alert Duchess Sophia. That lady was never tired of tirading against her sister-in-law, the "little clot of dirt" as she invariably calls her in her letters to her niece, and she seized on this incident

to point her moral. "Is it not a pity," she wrote to the Duchess of Orleans, "that Ernest Augustus and myself should have made such a blunder and called to our Court that 'little clot of dirt,' the more so that we had at hand the Biegle, whom William liked well enough, though she was not so fascinating as his French vixen, who really is a splendid *Stückfleisch*. She would have done very well, and at least have remained in her proper place. Never mind, Sophie Dorothea will avenge us all; she is a little *canaille*, and we shall see."

This, to put it mildly, shows a loose moral view on the part of the Duchess Sophia, to say nothing of the coarseness of expression. Her prophecy about the little Princess did not seem very likely of fulfilment then. The death of Augustus Frederick of Wolfenbüttel left the field open, and an alliance with the great House of Lüneburg-Celle was eagerly courted. The beauty and wealth of Sophie Dorothea, though she was only just in her teens, made her a desirable bride, and it was no longer the sons of the nobility who sought her hand, but princes of the reigning Houses of Europe. The Duke of Celle had almost arranged a match for his daughter with a younger son of the King of Denmark, when the Queen of Denmark actively interposed, and, with much violence and many expletives, broke off the match. This lady had once received Eléonore at dinner, but had refused her the kiss of honour. In revenge, Eléonore had commented on the badness of the Queen's *cuisine*; so they were far from friends. Probably the Duchess Sophia, who was very friendly with the Queen of Denmark, had a hand

ELÉONORE D'OLBREUSE, DUCHESS OF CELLE. [*To face p.* 36.

in bringing about the failure of these negotiations, for we find her writing: "Well done! Fancy a king's son for that bit of a bastard! Upon my word, one has to come from Poitou to be so impudent!"

The gibe was of course aimed at Eléonore, who found herself on this occasion outwitted by her sister-in-law. Up to this time Eléonore's influence with her husband was not sensibly impaired. His thoughts were still engrossed with her advancement, and he first made a new treaty, by which his wife was allowed the title of Duchess of Lüneburg-Celle; and, secondly, drew up an agreement to further safeguard her rights and those of her daughter to the rich estates of Wilhelmsburg. Both these documents were countersigned by the wily Ernest Augustus, whose consent was necessary, but who was only induced to yield by a high price being paid for his complaisance.

The Duke of Celle thought his wife worthy of any pecuniary sacrifice at this time. Her conduct was so irreproachable as a wife and a mother that she won the esteem even of those who were prejudiced against her. Grave, dignified, and beautiful, she held her husband's truant affections much longer than any one would have supposed, and was careful by her conduct to make good the position to which she had been raised. Her bitterest enemies were unable to tarnish her fair name, and this is no mean tribute to her virtue and prudence when we remember the age in which she lived and the circumstances surrounding her. Under Eléonore's rule the Court of

Celle became a model of decorum. The jovial Duke, though wealthy and hospitable, hated display and ostentation, and loved nothing so much as a quiet life. His tastes were those of an English country squire. He was a fine judge of wine, and had many rare vintages in his cellar; he had three hundred and seventy horses in his stables, mostly English or bred in England; his kennels, too, were largely filled with dogs of English breed. He was a mighty Nimrod, devoted to out-door sports. A little business with his Ministers and a good deal of hunting—that was his programme for the day, and in the evening he loved nothing better than to share the joys of the domestic hearth with his wife and child. Eléonore, unlike most ladies who have risen in the world, seemed equally averse to display for its own sake, and shunned rather than courted the trappings of State. So the Court of Celle was peaceful and virtuous, perhaps a little dull.

It was far different at the Court of Hanover.

The death of Duke John Frederick without issue in 1679 had now brought Ernest Augustus and Sophia to reign over Hanover as well as Osnabrück. Duke John Frederick was not greatly mourned, and his reign, though merry, had been brief. Like his brothers, he was fond of Italy, and acquired there a love of foreign ways and a liking for the Roman Catholic religion, to which he became a convert. Louis XIV., who was by way of being a defender of the faith, gave this ducal convert a handsome pension, and treated him with marked favour. John Frederick's eyes were

dazzled by the glory of the Grand Monarque, whose splendour was the wonder of Europe, and he tried to turn Hanover into an imitation Versailles: pseudo-classical statues were erected in the gardens; fountains were dotted about the terraces; there were fireworks, masquerades, and pastoral plays, Italian singers and French dancers; many foreign *monsignori* flitted about the Court, and mass was again sung in the churches. The honest Hanoverians rubbed their eyes and knew not what to make of it all. But alien though their Duke was in some things, he had one taste in common with his long-suffering subjects—he loved his beer, and, after a prolonged course of hard drinking, he died from an overspell of it. As the Duchess Sophia wrote, "He died as a true German should, glass in hand."

This "true German" being gathered to his fathers, Duke Ernest Augustus and Duchess Sophia made haste to reign in his stead. Sophia thanked Heaven for having thus placed her husband out of the reach of his enemies, "as which the whole Court of Celle had now to be regarded." It was indeed a notable accession of dignity and wealth. Both were ambitious and loved money and ostentation; they now had a chance of gratifying their tastes. In a smaller way Ernest Augustus had also imitated Louis XIV.'s Court at Osnabrück, and it seemed to that "most Christian" monarch that the new Duke of Hanover would follow his brother in matters of religion. He therefore dispatched a plenipotentiary, Gourville, to sound him on the subject and to offer the same bait in

the way of pension as he had dangled before the eyes of John Frederick. But Ernest Augustus was now not so needy, and he had other objects in view, so he replied oracularly that though no doubt a change of religion would be advantageous to his House he himself was too old to change. All religions were much the same to Sophia; but she disliked being meddled with in spiritual matters, and had her own interests, too—her English interests, then remote—which would certainly be imperilled by a change of faith. So the worthy pair, after taking counsel together, hit on a compromise by not educating their daughter Sophia Charlotte in any faith, so that she might marry the most promising prince who offered himself, whether he were Catholic or Protestant. When sounded later on the subject of her daughter's faith, the Duchess answered, "She is of no religion as yet." It was lucky that Sophia turned a deaf ear to the blandishments of the French King and the Pope, or the House of Hanover and the Protestant succession would never have ruled in England.

Though under the new *régime* the Court of Hanover differed in religious ceremonial from that of Versailles, in other respects it was a bad imitation, and the grafting of spurious French architecture on the little mediæval German town produced many incongruous effects, as incongruous as the aping of French manners and French morals. For the Court of Hanover imitated not only the pleasures of Versailles, but also its vices. Unlike his brother

George William, matrimony had effected no change in the laxities of Ernest Augustus, and the explanation is probably to be found in the fact that his was a marriage of policy, while the other's was a marriage of love. Ernest Augustus was a man of six times the ability of George William. He was selfish and scheming, but there was a certain splendid good nature about him, and though his Court was dissolute, it was always brilliant. The money for his pleasures, for he was as great a spendthrift as his brother was the reverse of one, he raised either by squeezing George William or by equipping regiments of his subjects and selling them to foreign service, as, for instance, to fight the Emperor's enemies on the Danube. This was in the approved style of the Grand Monarque, who always had a war on hand by way of a kingly pastime. Louis XIV., like Solomon of old, had also his beautiful favourites in great array, who reaped rich rewards of wealth and influence. This period of European history may be said to mark the apotheosis of military and political adventurers and Royal mistresses. There was no Court without its adventurers, and a king was hardly a king without a bevy of mistresses. Many of them were women of noble birth, who embarked on the career with the encouragement of their parents and guardians, and even of their husbands. Louise de Querouaille, afterwards Duchess of Portsmouth, went over from France to England to win the favour of Charles II. In the same way Clara Elizabeth and Catherine Marie von Meissenburg journeyed to

Osnabrück in the hope of capturing the good will of Ernest Augustus and his son.

Clara Elizabeth and Catherine Marie were of noble birth. Their father, Count Carl Philip von Meissenburg, was a needy military adventurer, and their faces were their only fortune. Their good looks, combined with much impudence, a lively wit, and an utter absence of principle, sufficed to form a very attractive pair in those days. When they were only in their teens Count von Meissenburg took his daughters to Paris with the hope of seeing them shine at the Court of Louis XIV., a sort of Mecca to which all these worldly pilgrims were then bound. But the established Royal favourites there did not view the fair intruders with favour, and gave them a hint that it would be better to decamp, or Paris would soon be too hot to hold them. The Meissenburgs, who were poor and therefore powerless, needed no second warning. Fear lent them wings; they packed up with all despatch, and, looking about for a likely spot to push their fortunes, they hit upon the little Court of Ernest Augustus, and set out thither with all speed.

The Court was then at Osnabrück, and it so chanced that the *demoiselles* Meissenburg arrived just when the two eldest sons of Ernest Augustus, George Louis and Frederick Augustus, had returned from their travels, accompanied by their governors Platen and Busche. The needy Count lost no time in presenting his daughters at Court, and evidently they created a favourable impression, for we find them helping at a *fête* in honour of the young Princes' return. The

LOUIS XIV. [*To face p.* 42.

*demoiselles* Meissenburg, who were fresh from all the graces and amusements of Versailles, composed a little pastoral play in French, which they craved permission to perform before the Duke and Duchess, and the performance was the most successful feature of the festival. It was given at night in the gardens, which were illuminated for the occasion. The young ladies appeared, as befitted their pastoral simplicity, in the guise of shepherdesses, and recited their lines so prettily, and danced and sang in so charming a way that they delighted their audience and especially won the hearts of the governors Platen and Busche. Having made so favourable an impression, the sisters remained at Osnabrück to follow up their advantage. It suited them well. It was a cheap town to live in; they had the *entrée* of the Court, and the free-and-easy air of the place gave them room to develop their schemes. At that time the young adventuresses had to moderate their ambitions. Ernest Augustus was far above them, and Prince George Louis was only a boy, and was sent away directly on military service. But meantime the Meissenburgs made the best of their opportunities. Platen and Busche were both rising men, and enjoyed the confidence of the Court. Failing higher game, the sisters resolved on making a conquest of them, and they unmasked their batteries with such success that before long they were comfortably settled in life, Clara Elizabeth as the wife of Platen, and Catherine Marie as the wife of Busche.

Attached now for good or evil to the House of

Brunswick-Lüneburg, the sisters shared in its improved fortunes, and when the Court of Ernest Augustus migrated to Hanover they went there too.

Of the two sisters, Clara Elizabeth, now Madame Platen, was immeasurably the superior, if not in youth and beauty, in cleverness and audacity. This woman is one of the worst instances in history of the evil influence of the Court mistress. She had no redeeming qualities ; she was unscrupulous, ambitious, and shamelessly corrupt. She was possessed of the immense power of one who has a fixed purpose in life, and who will stick at nothing to obtain it. Having obtained the first object of her ambition, a safe and respectable position, she was wise enough to recognise an identity of interest with her husband, and to see that as he advanced she would advance with him. To this end she sought to obtain influence over Ernest Augustus. Platen, after his marriage, was promoted to a confidential position, and when the Court went to Hanover he was raised to the responsible post of Minister. His wife thus found herself within the charmed circle and within touch of what she most desired—power. A masterful disposition gave her complete sway over her husband ; she dictated to Platen, who, in turn, advised Ernest Augustus. But this was too round about a method for Madame Platen, who wished to be next the Duke himself. Before long a post was found for her in the service of the Duchess Sophia, and thus she came frequently before the notice of Ernest Augustus. She played her cards very discreetly, and, with the connivance of her husband, brought all

her arts, flatteries, and fascinations to bear upon the Duke; so that Ernest Augustus was first astonished at her cleverness, next flattered by her pretended admiration for himself, and then fascinated by her good looks. In a short time her influence over him was supreme. Not content with having won the Duke, Madame Platen determined also to bring the son under her influence. When Prince George Louis returned from his military service she threw her sister, Madame Busche, in his way. Her sister was younger and prettier than Madame Platen, but much less clever and wholly under the influence of this imperious woman. The precocious young Prince fell captive to the charms of Madame Busche, who also had a complaisant husband. Thus Madame Platen became all powerful at the Court of Hanover. It is an ugly chapter in the history of the Hanoverian House, yet one that cannot be ignored.

Some Court mistresses have been real politicians, and their influence on public affairs—Madame de Maintenon's, for instance—was for good and not evil. But Madame Platen was hardly a political woman of the first rank; she was incapable of taking a wide view of affairs, and her efforts were directed towards the immediate aggrandisement of the little Principality of Hanover, without a thought of the larger interests outside. Into the family feud between Celle and Hanover she entered with zest, and made common cause with Ernest Augustus and Sophia against Eléonore and the Celle-Wolfenbüttel party. She noted the growing intimacy between George William and Antony Ulrich,

which she shrewdly suspected boded no good to the fortunes of the Court of Hanover. Her methods were essentially those of the backstairs, and she persuaded Ernest Augustus to employ spies at Celle to report all that went on there. In this way she acquired a knowledge of the disposition of the Ministers who held office at Celle. The most powerful of them all was Bernstorff, the Duke's Prime Minister. Bernstorff was an ambitious and avaricious man with little principle, who had already shown jealousy of the influence which Eléonore exercised over her husband and resented her interference in affairs of State. Madame Platen saw in him an instrument for her designs; she approached him with many promises, and some more substantial pledges from Ernest Augustus—*item*, a gold snuff-box set with diamonds, and similar tokens of good will. Bernstorff was quite willing to listen to these overtures; he was anxious to become a great landed proprietor, and Ernest Augustus promised to advance his wishes in this and other respects if he would carry out his plans. He was opposed to the Celle-Wolfenbüttel party headed by the Duchess Eléonore, he desired nothing better than her downfall; so he took the bribe, and confidential communications were opened up with Hanover. In particular he warned Ernest Augustus of the schemes of Duke Antony Ulrich, who was now urging the betrothal of his second son to the little Sophie Dorothea. These communications were not nominally carried on between responsible Ministers, but between a spy at Celle and Madame Platen at

Hanover, so that if anything transpired they could both be disowned by the responsible Governments; but in reality Madame Platen was dictating the policy of Hanover.

A pretty picture of moral and political corruption, it must be confessed. One wonders what the haughty Duchess Sophia thought of it all, and by what inexplicable means this inscrutable woman was brought to become a passive witness of the double capture by audacious adventuresses of her husband and her son. Her policy was to consistently ignore anything she could not help; and in this case she seems to have offered no protest. The key to this riddle is probably to be found in her character. The moral objection would not appeal to her, for though the Duchess Sophia in her own personal conduct was absolutely above reproach, and there is abundant evidence to prove she held that the virtue of princesses should be above suspicion, yet she had been trained in a school and an age which did not demand an equal standard of morality from men as from women, least of all from princes. In her day women of the Platen type were as much a part of the *entourage* of a Court as the lacqueys in the kitchen or the grooms in the stables, and since this was so, why not Madame Platen as well as another? Sophia had done her duty to Ernest Augustus in every sense of the word. She had been a good and faithful wife; she had upheld the dignity of the Courts of Osnabrück and Hanover; she had borne her husband six children, five sons and a daughter; and though they had never

any love in the highest sense for one another, yet in time affection seems to have sprung up between this curious couple, and they got on very well together, mainly on the principle of leaving each other alone. According to his lights, and possibly her lights also, Ernest Augustus was a good husband; he always treated his consort with profound respect, and outwardly he fulfilled the letter of his contract with her, it was only in the spirit he failed, but Sophia probably did not care about that. She was his Duchess, the mother of his sons, the great lady of the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg, and that sufficed her. She was fond of her children, too, especially of the younger boys and her daughter, but for George Louis, her eldest son, she had very little love. She therefore probably regarded his affair with Madame Busche with indifference. Nor did religious scruples enter to any extent. She was a free-thinking woman, who, from a philosophic eminence, looked down upon all dogma with contempt. "The Princess Sophia," says Dean Lockier, "was a woman of good sense and excellent conversation. I was very well acquainted with her. She sat very loose in her religious principles, and used to take a particular pleasure in setting a heretic (infidel), whenever she could meet such, and one of her chaplains disputing together." This is a quaint characteristic; and we may picture Sophia's face as she baited her chaplain with some truculent infidel, and chuckled while they fought together, finally dismissing them with, "A plague on both your houses."[1]

[1] A similar pastime was frequently indulged in by her grand-daughter-

Hitherto we have viewed this Princess in a somewhat unamiable light—the side she showed to Eléonore; it is only fair to turn the other side of the shield. Her failings were the failings of her times, her virtues were all her own. Reared in a dissolute Court, married into a vicious one, no word of scandal was ever breathed against her moral character. She remained beyond and apart, a serene and haughty figure, head and shoulders above the mean, coarse, voluptuous, lying crowd with which she was surrounded. Whatever was pure and of good repute, whatever made for the higher and intellectual life, turned to Sophia at the Court of Hanover. She was a woman of great parts, speaking five languages—Low Dutch, German, French, Italian, and English—fluently, and was learned in the literature of them all. She attracted to Hanover some of the choicest intellectual spirits of the age, and among them was the great and learned Leibnitz, whose friend and patron she was. In turn he warmly respected and admired her: she was the "Serena" of his letters, and together they discussed those subtle philosophies beside which such things as Court intrigues and Court courtesans were as nothing worth.

It was doubtless her communing in these serene altitudes, together with the considerations before mentioned, which enabled the Duchess Sophia to ignore Madame Platen and lesser annoyances. Outwardly she received from the Court mistress every mark of respect and

in-law, Queen Caroline, wife of George II., who was also most tolerant of her husband's mistresses. No doubt she learned both these peculiarities from Sophia.

homage. However impudent, brazen, and intriguing Madame Platen might be, she was always submissive and decorous before the Duchess Sophia, always her very humble lady-in-waiting. The Duchess was not of a jealous temperament, and in matters where her rank and her rights were not imperilled her heart did not enter. Madame Platen would always be Madame Platen; she could never rise, for instance, to the heights of the upstart d'Olbreuse, and arrogate to herself the position of an equal of the daughter of kings; and so long as she kept her place, what matter? Besides, according to her lights, the woman was working for the greater glory of the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg and against the hated Eléonore. These seem the ostensible grounds on which it can be explained why the Duchess Sophia allowed, without protest, such a power near her throne. But there was perhaps another reason, too, which overshadowed all the rest.

The great and splendid inheritance of the Throne of England already began to be dangled before Sophia's eyes like a beacon light. English events absorbed her to the exclusion of others, and the affairs of the Court of Hanover were mere village politics beside them. Sophia had one virtue for which every Englishman will love her. She loved "her country," as she called England, with all her heart and soul and strength; "her country," which she had never seen, which she was destined never to see; "her country," over which her grandfather had reigned a wellnigh absolute monarch; "her country," to which her mother had

gone back, as to home, to end her days; "her country," for which her brother, the dashing Prince Rupert, had fought on the King's side throughout the Great Rebellion; "her country," over which her son was to reign and her children's children from generation to generation. The reproach of being German and alien in sympathy, later, often urged against the House of Hanover, could never have been brought against Sophia, for her heart was as "entirely English" as Queen Anne's. She early imbibed her love for England and things English. She spoke the language fluently, far better than many a Stuart. She was learned in England's history, its customs, and its laws. She had an English maid always with her. In her youth she had been within measurable distance of becoming Queen Consort of England; in her old age she was within an ace of being Queen Regnant.[1] It is a pity she was never Queen of England. She would have been another and a wiser Elizabeth, whom in many ways she strongly resembled—in her love of statecraft, her broad and liberal view of things, her contempt for jarring creeds, her wisdom and resource. Yes, it is a thousand pities she was never Queen of England; she would have made a wiser ruler than any of her Stuart cousins, and a far better than any of her descendants, save one only—the present illustrious and revered occupant of the Throne, whose long and beneficent reign has won for her the first place among England's monarchs of any dynasty.

[1] She died less than three months before Queen Anne.

# CHAPTER IV

## *PRINCE GEORGE GOES A-WOOING*

(1681—1682)

He that travels in a country before he has some entrance into the language, goeth to school and not to travel.—BACON.

FROM her watch-tower at Hanover the Duchess Sophia followed with keen interest the course of events in England, an interest which increased every day of her life until at last it became an absorbing passion. She spared no pains to keep up a good understanding between herself and her English relatives. When Charles II. was restored to the throne of his ancestors, she sent him a warm letter of congratulation, written in the oddest French, which is still preserved among the Lambeth manuscripts. Throughout her cousin's reign Sophia continued to watch affairs in England. She noted Charles's childless marriage to Catherine of Braganza.[1] She noted the dislike and jealousy of the people of England to Popery, and the conversion of the heir to the throne, the Duke of

[1] "She [Sophia] told me," writes Lord Dartmouth many years later, "that she was once like to have been married to King Charles II., which would not have been worse for the nation, considering how many children she had brought, to which I most sincerely agreed."

York, to the Roman Catholic religion, and his consequent unpopularity. She noted the marriage of his eldest daughter, Princess Mary of York, to William of Orange, and the childless condition of the Dutchman and his spouse. Last of all, she noted that the Princess Anne of York, on whom it seemed likely the Crown of England would devolve in the course of nature, had reached a marriageable age, and she saw in her son, George Louis, the husband for her, and prepared to act.

George Louis had now attained his majority. He was not an ideal lover, by no means a Prince Charming, though so far as looks were concerned he might have passed muster. He was about the middle height, dark, with strongly marked features, but he carried himself badly, and was awkward of figure, still more awkward in manner. He favoured neither of his parents. Ernest Augustus gilded his faults by a certain generosity and refinement, which earned for him the title of "the gentleman of Germany." George Louis was niggardly, he had no charm of manner, he was vindictive, sullen, slow of speech, and altogether unprepossessing. His mother, as we have seen, was a woman of high culture and education and a ready wit, which caused her to be known as "the merry, *débonnaire* princess of Germany." George Louis's education had been neglected, he had no love of learning, and an intense dislike of literature, nor had he any accomplishments save the love of music characteristic of his race. But, on the other hand, he was a good soldier, a man of

the camp rather than of the Court. His tutors threw up their hands in despair when they endeavoured to teach him anything from books, but he took to military service as a duck takes to water. He served under his father, when only fifteen, in the campaign in 1675, and fought bravely at Consarbrück, at the siege of Treves, and in the campaign on the Rhine; he was at the sieges of Maestricht and Charleroy, and again at the battle near St. Denis, and on every occasion he distinguished himself. He had his own rough code of honour. He never told a lie. He possessed in a marked degree that courage which even their bitterest detractors cannot withhold from the princes of the House of Hanover. Yet with all his military instinct he loved not bloodshed for its own sake; he was a man of peace. He had humanity for the wounded on the field of battle, and could respect a fallen foe. His methods were brutal, but straightforward; he was no intriguer, and, though profligate, he was honest.

Ernest Augustus was in despair at the rude manners of his boorish son, and thought that travel would improve him. As he was not over welcome at home, he sent him to the Court of France, to pick up a little polish for one thing, and, for another, to try to improve matters between Louis XIV. and himself. But the young Prince returned much the same. He was not a diplomat, and his efforts in that direction were not a success.

It was then that the Duchess Sophia broached her plan of sending him to England as a suitor of the

PRINCE GEORGE LOUIS OF HANOVER. [*To face p.* 54.

*(Afterwards George I. of England.)*

Princess Anne of York. It was emphatically *her* plan. Madame Platen had nothing to do with it, was not even consulted ; in fact, Sophia never recognised in any way this woman's influence. The moment could not have been more propitious. The anti-Popery feeling was running high in England, and already overtures had been made by the Protestant party to the House of Hanover. Duke Ernest Augustus did not think much of these overtures ; the prospect was too vague. England was to him little more than a geographical expression, and the violent events of recent years filled him with distrust. He had witnessed in England the Great Rebellion, the downfall of the Monarchy, the execution of the King, the setting up of the Commonwealth, the downfall of the Commonwealth, the restoration of the Monarchy, and now, lo and behold ! the Puritan party seemed to be rising again. He did not trust a nation which indulged in such extremes, and he regarded England much as the average Englishman to-day regards France. But he was not averse from the idea of marrying his eldest son to a Princess of the Royal House of England ; in any case she would have a goodly dower, and so, to please his wife and his own inclinations, he consented to find the money to dispatch George Louis to England in a manner befitting his rank and errand.

The Duchess Sophia was delighted with her husband's willingness to fall in with her plan (she little knew that all the while behind her back he was intriguing for another match for Prince George, should this fall through), and she took the keenest interest in her

son's visit. Another also took an interest, that born intriguer, William of Orange, the husband of the Princess Mary of York, who was jealously watching events in England. When he heard of George Louis's intended visit he scented mischief ahead, and sent a flattering invitation to Hanover asking the young Prince to spend a month with him at the Hague on his way to England. Sophia was glad that her son should visit his Stuart cousins in Holland, and the invitation was accepted. It was a fatal error of policy, for William soon learnt from the young Prince the object of his mission, and immediately set to work to render it null and void. He, too, was half a Stuart, a grandson of Charles I., and the prospect of the Crown of England had its charms for him also; he coveted it not merely for his wife. If George Louis married the Princess Anne, and the Princess of Orange died before her (as in fact she did, though not till she had been Queen), William, her consort, would probably have to give way to their prior claims; for George Louis was a Protestant, and only one step further removed from the blood royal of England than himself; therefore it behoved him to move heaven and earth to prevent this match.

He had spies in England, at Hanover, and at Celle, and he set them all at work. His agent in Hanover was probably Madame Platen, and at Celle Bernstorff, both of whom were open to bribes. Their work was simple: they were to represent to their respective princes how much more suitable and advantageous it would be if George Louis married

Sophie Dorothea. Of course, they could do nothing more than prepare the ground, and drop a hint now and then; but even that would bear fruit. In England William had emissaries everywhere, at Court, and even in the household of Princess Anne.

Meanwhile the unsuspecting George Louis parted from his cousins, William and Mary, with many expressions of good will, and set sail for England. He anchored off Greenwich early in December, 1680 (New Style). His arrival was well timed, from the popularity point of view. Public feeling was excited over the so-called Popish plots, and the unpopularity of the Duke of York was at its height. The Bill which excluded him from the succession to the throne because he was a Papist was before Parliament, and in the event of its passing into law George Louis's prospects as a Protestant descendant of the Stuarts would be improved. The Bill did pass with acclamation, but the King dissolved Parliament immediately.

George Louis's arrival, though his errand was well known, does not seem to have been equally popular with the Court; his barque lay in the mud off Greenwich, but no one was sent to look out for him or to bid him welcome. When he landed in England again it was as King; but that is another story. At this time George Louis did not expect great things; he sent to his uncle Rupert, and presumably explained matters to him. Henceforward things went smoothly. What happened is best told in a letter which he wrote to his mother, the Duchess Sophia. This letter, which is written with much sprightliness in the original

French, does not bear out the assertion that George Louis was very illiterate.

"London, *December* 30 (Old Style),
"*January* 10 (New Style), 1680—1681.

"After wishing Your Serene Highness a very happy New Year, I will not delay letting you know that I arrived here on December 6, having remained one day at anchor at Grunnevitsch [Greenwich] till M. Beck went on shore to take a house for me. He did not fail to find out Uncle Robert [Prince Rupert] and let him know of my arrival at Grunnevitsch, who did not delay telling King Charles. His Majesty immediately appointed me apartments at Weithal [Whitehall]. M. Beck requested Uncle Robert to excuse me; but King Charles, when he spoke thus, insisted that it should absolutely be so, for he would treat me *en cousin*, and after that no more could be said. Therefore M. Cotterel came on the morrow to find me out with a barque of the King, and brought me therein to Weithal. I had not been there more than two hours when Milord Hamilton came to take me to the King, who received me most obligingly. Uncle Robert had preceded me, and was at Court when I saluted King Charles. In making my obeisance to the King, I did not omit to give him the letter of Your Serene Highness, after which he spoke of Your Highness, and said 'that he remembered you very well.' When he had talked with me some time he went to the Queen [Catherine of Braganza], and as soon as I arrived he made me kiss the hem of

Her Majesty's petticoat (*qui l'on fit baiser la jupe à la reine*).

"The next day I saw the Princess of York [the Princess Anne], and I saluted her by kissing her, with the consent of the King. The day after, I went to visit Uncle Robert, who received me in bed, for he has a malady in his leg which makes him very often keep his bed. It appears that it is so without any pretext, and that he has to take care of himself. He had not failed of coming to see me one day.

"All the *milords* came to see me *sans pretendre la main chez moi*. Milord Greue [Grey] came to me very often indeed.

"They cut off the head of Lord Stafford yesterday, and made no more ado about it than if they had chopped off the head of a pullet.

"I have no more to tell Your Serene Highness, wherefore I conclude, and remain your very humble son and servant, "George Louis."

Prince George Louis's wooing did not prosper as might have been expected from so promising a beginning. The Princess Anne at that time was seventeen years old, in the full bloom of youth, and had a considerable share of good looks of a somewhat florid description. Accustomed as she was to all the grace and splendour of the English Court, Princess Anne looked with little favour on the awkward advances of her German cousin, who could not speak a word of the English language, and whose person was not pleasing nor his manner courtly. Naturally

reserved, he was very shy when he was first presented to her, and awkward in saluting her, and William of Orange caused it to be whispered to Anne that the Prince's backwardness was owing to an irrepressible disgust which he felt for her at first sight, and that he had spoken slightingly of her charms. This was enough for Anne, whose vanity was easily wounded ; she would have nothing more to say to her loutish lover, and cherished a lifelong resentment at the imaginary affront.

Neither the King nor the Duke of York favoured the suit of the Hanoverian Prince, because he was unjustly supposed to be in league with the Prince of Orange. But still George Louis lingered in England, and paid a visit to Cambridge, where he was received with every mark of honour and given the degree of Doctor of Laws. Cambridge was thus early in the field to demonstrate her loyalty to the House of Hanover. When it is remembered that the Prince was a stranger to England, and could not speak a word of the language, it is evident there must have been some political motive on the part of the University. It was to be found in party feeling, which then ran high. Parliament met at Oxford, and was still clamouring for the Exclusion Bill, but the King put his foot down, absolutely refused to alter the succession, and again dissolved Parliament. This was a severe blow to the Protestant party and incidentally to the Protestant princes.

Soon after, George Louis was summoned home abruptly, and he returned to Hanover in the spring.

Ernest Augustus, seeing there was no hope of his son marrying the Princess Anne, became impatient about the English succession, for which he did not care a fig ; besides, there was a tendency in England to draw the young Prince into intrigues, and both Sophia and himself always opposed anything which might tend to embarrass the reigning House of England. In this respect the conduct of the House of Hanover forms an honourable contrast to that of William of Orange. Her son's return empty-handed was a bitter disappointment to Sophia, who saw her English hopes shattered. She withdrew once more to the consolations of philosophy, conscious that the failure of her plan had brought with it a waning of her influence with her husband. George Louis had been sent on a wild-goose chase, and Ernest Augustus had to pay the bill, which he did with very ill grace ; for, though he was lavish with money where his own pleasures were concerned, he had the German thriftiness about spending it on others.

Madame Platen's star now came into the ascendant, and she urged with added force and plausibility the scheme of a marriage between George Louis and his cousin, Sophie Dorothea. Of course, all had to be done behind the back of the Duchess Sophia, who regarded the Court of Celle with unconcealed aversion. Ernest Augustus had not the same feeling of personal bitterness against Eléonore as his wife, and he was quite willing to make terms with George William, or, for a matter of that, with her, if he could thereby add to his fortunes, and he therefore gave ready ear

to the idea. The advantages of the union were many and obvious; the young lady was rich, her dower would be large, the marriage would unite the severed principalities of Celle and Hanover, and so add enormously to the power of the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg; it would end an unpleasant family feud, fraught with weakness and danger to both parties, and would set up again an identity of interest between the brothers. All this would happen if Sophie Dorothea married George Louis; but if she married a rival prince, under the present strained relations, dangers would arise which it would be impossible to foresee. The breach would widen, and the Principality of Hanover would be threatened with a foe at its very doors. From a political point of view nothing could be better than this marriage—for Hanover. At Celle the ground was not unprepared; Platen had communicated with Bernstorff, and that pliant tool had also sounded George William. As the continual dropping of water wears away a stone, so Bernstorff, by hint and innuendo, was slowly undermining the influence of the Duchess of Celle. He traded on the fact that she was "the Frenchwoman," he exaggerated the jealousy which arose from so many French officers holding commissions in the ducal army, he hinted discreetly to the Duke that the neighbouring princes and even the Emperor were laughing at him because he allowed himself to be ruled by his wife, and he particularly opposed the growing power of the Celle-Wolfenbüttel party.

Duke Antony Ulrich had by this time brought forward his eldest surviving son, a handsome prince, as a suitor for the hand of Sophie Dorothea. The young couple were of a suitable age, and Eléonore warmly encouraged the match. If the matter had rested with her, the betrothal would long since have taken place. Her first check had come when she proposed it to George William. To her astonishment he held back. He was superstitious, and thought the untoward ending of the first match between his daughter and a Prince of the House of Wolfenbüttel was an ill-omen. He did not approve of her marriage with the younger brother when she had been betrothed to the elder, for in Germany at that time betrothal was almost as solemn a compact as marriage itself. These were the reasons he put forward for opposing the betrothal; but Eléonore talked him over, and at last he was induced to unwillingly give what was practically a consent, on the condition that the betrothal should be postponed until Sophie Dorothea was sixteen, and meantime the arrangement should be kept strictly secret. With this Eléonore and Antony Ulrich had to be content. There is little doubt that it was Bernstorff who prompted the delay, just as he now used the time gained to further oppose the match and to urge the Hanoverian claims.

So matters went on until September, 1682, when Sophie Dorothea was to attain her sixteenth birthday. In some way the half promise which the Duke of Celle had given leaked out, and also the news that

Duke Antony Ulrich and his son were coming to Celle for the celebration of the Princess's birthday on September 15. Bernstorff immediately communicated this to the Court of Hanover. The news filled Ernest Augustus and his advisers, the Platens, with dismay; they had been intriguing for months, and now, through a sudden move on the part of the Duchess of Celle, their schemes were on the edge of failure. If Bernstorff had not discovered the plot they would certainly have been lost. In any case the time for talking was past, the time for action had come; Antony Ulrich and the young Prince were actually on their way to Celle, and Eléonore was arranging a great festival, when no doubt the betrothal would be publicly announced. Then it would be too late. Owing to the badness of the roads, the news only arrived at Hanover on the morning of the day before. What was to be done? If Ernest Augustus were to go to Celle, Eléonore would guess the reason of his sudden appearance and outwit him. To send George Louis would be to court failure (they had had two experiences of *his* diplomacy); to send a Minister would be useless; to send Madame Platen an insult. There was only one person who could hope to carry the difficult business through and that was the Duchess Sophia. She had influence with the Duke of Celle. Her quarrel had been with his wife and not with him. He had always treated her with honour and even affection; probably he felt some twinge of shame for the shabby way he had behaved to her years before. Her descent from a long line of kings,

her high position, learning, and virtues, her wit and resource, all made her the ideal ambassadress for such a mission. George William would be flattered by her condescension in coming to Celle; he was already favourably disposed to the match, and he could not refuse her. But would she go?

It was not without misgiving that Ernest Augustus repaired to his Duchess, laid bare his plan, and implored her aid. It came to her as a revelation, and at first the haughty Sophia would have none of it. She hated the d'Olbreuse, and despised Sophie Dorothea because she was her daughter; she had never recognised them, never visited them, and always treated them as dirt beneath her feet. The last thing she contemplated or wished was to be brought into closer alliance with them. But the arguments and entreaties of Ernest Augustus had weight with her; he reminded her that her English plan had failed, and urged that she should make some compensation for the expense and disappointment which she had brought upon him. She recognised the force of this reasoning; she was just now suffering all the humiliations of defeat, and if she could carry this difficult thing through it would restore her lost prestige. She knew well enough—it did not need to be explained to her—the substantial advantages that would accrue from the union of the duchies and the bringing of a large dowry into the coffers of Hanover. She saw, too, how disastrous it would be for the Celle-Wolfenbüttel party to triumph and Eléonore to be victorious. The last thought was perhaps the most powerful of all; by consenting to

go to Celle she would outwit her rival, wound her to the heart, frustrate her most cherished plan, and ruin her influence for ever. So Sophia consented to undertake the mission, and, with characteristic energy, prepared to start at once. The state chariot and Mecklenburg horses were ordered out, and with postillions and outriders the haughty Duchess set forth. There was no time to be lost; she must reach Celle before to-morrow morning or the Wolfenbüttels would be there before her.

It was a dull evening in mid-September when Sophia rumbled in her heavy coach out of Hanover and over the rough road towards Celle. Celle is distant from Hanover about twenty miles as the crow flies; but because of heavy rains many of the roads were impassable, and the coach had to travel by a circuitous route. It took the Duchess all night to reach her journey's end.

# CHAPTER V

## *THE SACRIFICE*

(1682)

> After this alliance
> Let tigers match with hinds, and wolves with sheep,
> And every creature couple with its foe.
>
> DRYDEN.

THE mists of a raw September morning hung about Celle as the Duchess Sophia drove in from the Hanover road, stiff and cold from her long journey. One wonders what thoughts crowded into her brain as the coach rattled through the quaint streets of the little town. She had not been here for seventeen years, never since Eléonore had queened it at the Castle, and she had come to-day to disqueen her, by destroying her influence and bringing to naught her most cherished scheme. Yet she would have to make peace with her, turn to her a smiling face, and enter into close and intimate relations with the woman she hated, insulted, and despised. It must have been with mingled feelings that Sophia saw the towers of the mighty Schloss rise before her.

The sleepy sentinel, recognising the unaccustomed liveries of Hanover, hurried to let down the draw-

bridge, raise the portcullis, and salute the great Duchess. The moment the coach entered the court-yard Sophia alighted. A glance sufficed to show her she was not too late, the Wolfenbüttel equipage was not yet there. Brushing aside ceremony, she, who was so great a stickler for etiquette, demanded to see the Duke of Celle at once. The few half-awakened servants who happened to be up as she entered the Castle, astonished at the unexpected apparition, explained to her that His Highness had not yet risen, he was even now dressing, but would soon be able to descend and receive her in a fitting manner. But Sophia was in no humour to tarry; ascending the great staircase, she haughtily demanded to be shown at once to the Duke's chamber, in bed or out of bed, dressed or undressed, her business was one which would admit of no delay. The flurried page conducted her to the door of the ducal apartment, and here she ordered him to leave, and announced herself by promptly opening the door and walking in upon the astonished Duke, who was then at his dressing-table.

Of all people in the world, his sister-in-law was the one George William least expected to see; but Sophia cut short his exclamations and apologies by announcing that she had travelled all night to present in person her congratulations to himself and his Duchess on the occasion of the sixteenth birthday of their daughter, and wound up by asking curtly, "Where is your wife?" The Duke pointed to the half-open door of the bedchamber adjoining, where Eléonore was still in bed—a capacious bed in a comparatively

A VIEW OF THE ALLER, CELLE. [*To face p.* 68.

(*On the right bank of the river was Sophie Dorothea's favourite walk.*)

small room with the ceiling decorated with a realistic fresco of the legend of Leda and the Swan.[1] Eléonore, hearing voices, called out to her husband to ask who came thus early to disturb their rest. The Duchess Sophia, through the half-open door, repeated in a loud voice what she had already said to the Duke, thus breaking the ice of the awkward first greeting with her enemy, and, without waiting to hear what the perturbed Eléonore had to say in reply, she turned to the Duke, and, addressing him in Low Dutch, a language she knew his wife did not understand, she intimated that she had something important to say to him alone. George William glanced meaningly at the half-open door, behind which was the flurried Eléonore, and suggested they should wait a little while and discuss the matter elsewhere. But Sophia cut short his excuses and proposals by answering that what she had to say must be said there and then. She could not be so rude as to shut the door in Eléonore's face, so she drew up a chair by the Duke's dressing-table, and, continuing to speak in Low Dutch, proceeded to unfold her scheme—first exacting from him a promise that, if he did not accede to her wishes, he was never to divulge a syllable of what she had come to say.

In a few vigorous sentences she skilfully explained the real object of her visit. She began by deploring the family feud which had too long existed between the Courts of Hanover and Celle, and expatiated upon the desirability of reconciliation and the advantages which would inevitably follow a closer

[1] The room remains the same to this day.

union. George William, who by this time had made a shrewd guess at what she was driving, followed her with many encouraging nods and ejaculations, and when the uneasy Eléonore from the next room called out that she would like to know the subject of the conversation, he bade her roughly to be quiet, and invited Sophia to proceed. That lady then touched upon the services which had been rendered to the Emperor by the troops of Hanover and Celle, and hinted at the probable raising of the Duchy to an Electorate ; she did not say which duchy, but George William thought it was the Duchy of Celle, whereas she had in her mind (and her surmise eventually proved correct) the accession of the Duchy of Hanover to this coveted dignity. She went on to say that sooner or later there would be an addition of territory in the shape of the Duchies of Bremen and Verden,[1] declared it would be a pity if a fine domain like Wilhelmsburg, Sophie Dorothea's inheritance, should be alienated from Brunswick-Lüneburg territory, and then by a natural sequence proceeded to show that all evils could be averted and all good things brought about by the marriage of her son George Louis with George William's daughter, Sophie Dorothea. George Louis she described in glowing terms ; she alluded to his high favour with William of Orange, and his connexion, through her, with the Royal House of England, which assured him the good will of that great Power.

George William was completely carried away by the

[1] This did not actually take place until the reign of George II.

eloquence and arguments of his illustrious sister-in-law. No one, he told her, could regret more than he the breach between the two Houses, it was not his doing, and he was glad of an opportunity of reconciliation. He saw clearly the advantages that would follow upon the marriage proposed, and he promised his consent. It is probable that he did not need much persuasion, he only wanted the excuse of meeting the proposal half way which her visit gave him, for William of Orange's hints and Bernstorff's pleadings had already prepared the ground. With the warmest assurances of friendship he kissed Sophia's hand, and then escorted her to a suite of apartments to rest after her journey.

The anxious Eléonore, who by this time was up and dressed, was waiting for her husband on his return, and asked for an explanation of this unexpected visit. He gave it promptly, and added the unwelcome intelligence that he had consented to an alliance between George Louis and Sophie Dorothea. Eléonore was at first stunned by this blow to her hopes on the very morning of expected victory. The alliance she had laboured for years to bring about with the House of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel was shattered to the dust, and the woman who had slighted and scorned her had only to propose an opposition scheme for it to be accepted. In vain she urged upon the Duke the insult such a *volte-face* would be to Duke Antony Ulrich and his son. George William answered testily that he had given nothing but a conditional promise. In vain she pointed out the hostility and self-seeking

policy of the House of Hanover. George William said he was tired of family quarrels, and hailed this as a means of putting an end to them. He then proceeded to dilate upon the advantages of the union, and the advisability of Eléonore reconciling herself to the new state of affairs and burying the hatchet. But Eléonore, to her honour be it said, was unlike her husband in this—she was deaf to the voice of ambition where her heart was concerned. The failure of her cherished plans was bad enough, but it was as nothing compared with the wreck of her daughter's happiness. She threw herself on her knees before her husband, and implored him, with tears, not to sacrifice their only child, the one pledge of their love, to the promptings of policy and ambition, and doom her to the misery of a loveless marriage; she reminded him of the tales that had reached Celle of George Louis's sullen and profligate character, and of the hatred with which the House of Hanover had ever viewed her daughter and herself. It was like throwing their lamb to the wolves. But George William was obdurate; he pooh-poohed all these things as idle fancies, and again told his wife to reconcile herself with the altered state of affairs, and, deaf to her entreaties, he bade her go and acquaint Sophie Dorothea with the plans he had made for her future. With a heavy heart the mother went to break the news to her daughter, a sad greeting for a birthday morning.

The young Princess had not been trained to control her emotions nor to having her will thwarted. The

spoiled darling of her father's affections, she had hitherto only to wish for a thing and it was hers, and her wishes had been law at Celle. When, therefore, she was told it was proposed to hand her over to a man she had scarcely seen, and whom she had been taught to despise, without consulting her wishes in any way, she flew into a violent passion, and vowed she would have to be dragged to the altar before she consented. Her heart was free, for, though she was well disposed towards the young Prince of Wolfenbüttel, she had not yet learned to love him, and, though romance has it otherwise, there is no proof that the boy and girl love between herself and Königsmarck had made much impression upon her. But she was by no means favourably disposed towards George Louis. She had heard of his loutish manners and his loose morals. Her mother had taught her from her youth up to regard the Duchess Sophia and her son as her greatest enemies. She knew how they had insulted her mother and what degrading epithets they had applied to herself, and the news that she was about to be handed over to their tender mercies filled her with consternation and grief. After the first outburst her emotion found relief in tears, and she clung to her mother, and besought her to save her from such a fate. Poor Eléonore, who was powerless, could only mingle her tears with her daughter's.

While this scene was being enacted in one wing of the Castle, in another the Duchess Sophia and George William sat down and despatched a hearty breakfast. Sophia, delighted with the success of her mission, spared

no pains to make herself agreeable and to flatter George William to the top of his bent ; she was also pleased to be gracious to Bernstorff, who had heard of the morning's work, and who, on his part, did everything he could to bolster up the Duke in his determination. A mounted messenger had already been despatched to carry the good news to Hanover, and to bid Duke Ernest Augustus and Prince George Louis come to Celle with all speed.

The breakfast was hardly over, the day had scarcely warmed, when the trumpeter on the tower announced the arrival of Duke Antony Ulrich and his son. They came with a numerous suite, ostensibly to offer their congratulations on the anniversary of the birthday of Sophie Dorothea, in reality to claim the fulfilment of her father's promise. The sight of the Duchess Sophia's coach in the courtyard and the Hanoverian liveries filled Antony Ulrich with suspicions which were only too speedily confirmed. The young Princess, he found, was too much perturbed to receive their congratulations in person, her mother was shut up with her ; but the Duke of Celle, accompanied by the Duchess Sophia, received the Wolfenbüttel princes with much ceremony, and without ado proceeded to inform them of the news of the betrothal of Sophie Dorothea to George Louis, and by way of adding insult to injury invited them to remain to the birthday feast, when the betrothal would be announced. Duke Antony Ulrich, mastering his indignation with an effort, was so much insulted at this shameless right-about-face that, ignoring the invitation, he at once

returned to his coach, accompanied by his son, and shook the dust of Celle off his feet. It is difficult to call such a retreat dignified, yet he seems to have made it so, though he left the Duchess Sophia in possession of the field.

George William, having got rid of his unwelcome guests, proceeded to the apartments of Sophie Dorothea on the troublesome errand of persuading his refractory daughter to put in an appearance and pay her respects to her aunt. He took with him a birthday present and a message of congratulation from the Duchess Sophia. The apartments of Sophie Dorothea consisted of three rooms leading from one another; the work-room or school-room, with two large windows overlooking the lime trees on to the moat, the parlour, somewhat elaborately decorated, and the sleeping-room, with the bed in an alcove, and a superb carved mantelpiece, supported by four cupids. These rooms Sophie Dorothea had occupied from her infancy, and her work and all her little treasures were scattered about. The Duke's resolution did not waver, though he found his daughter lying on the bed in a passion of grief, her mother by her side entreating her to be calm. Apparently her persuasions had not, so far, had much effect, for the temper with which Sophie Dorothea received her father may be gathered from the fact that when he gave her the Duchess Sophia's present, a miniature of George Louis set in diamonds, she threw it from her with such violence that it was shattered against the wall, and the precious stones fell all about the room.

Her father began to threaten and storm and reproach her mother for encouraging their daughter in this insubordination. Parental authority had its weight with even the most self-willed young Princess in those days, and the result of the combination of her father's threats and her mother's entreaties was that Sophie Dorothea gradually became calmer, and was coaxed or forced into getting up and dressing herself, and consenting to be presented to her aunt Sophia in a proper manner. She had also to go through the ordeal of receiving the birthday congratulations of the Court and of appearing at the banquet, when her betrothal was announced ; but her tear-stained eyes and downcast looks, no less than her mother's pallor and dejection, made it evident that she was acting under compulsion, and evoked the pity rather than the congratulations of the Court of Celle. Perhaps the Duchess Sophia found in the grief and tears of Eléonore and her daughter some consolation for the humiliation she underwent in thus recognising and meeting them for the first time as equals.

The next day Ernest Augustus and George Louis arrived from Hanover. Ernest Augustus was radiant, but George Louis was even more sullen than his wont. The beginning of the wooing was not promising. The young Princess fainted in her mother's arms when she was presented to her future husband. Her dislike was quite reciprocated by George Louis, who, though willing to go through the affair for the sake of the money, had been trained to have nothing

but contempt for "Madame" of Celle and her daughter. His manners at the best were not prepossessing, and in this case he does not seem to have taken the trouble to make himself agreeable to his future bride. The elders did all the smiles and congratulations; the principals in the contract rendered nothing but an outward acquiescence, sulky on his side, and rebellious on hers.

Yet, looking at it from quite the outside point of view, if George Louis had sought all over Europe he would hardly have found a more suitable match than this, and he certainly could not have found a more charming bride than his princess cousin. Sophie Dorothea had grown to great beauty. She was a brunette, with dark brown, almost black, hair, large velvety eyes, regular features, brilliant complexion, and the veriest little red rosebud of a mouth. Her figure was perfectly proportioned: she had an exquisite neck and bust, and slender little hands and feet. She had nothing in common with the large-waisted, flat-footed German princesses of the period; she favoured her mother, and, like her, was essentially "the Frenchwoman," not only in appearance, but in manners, dress, and conversation. She had the Frenchwoman's instinctive dislike to anything coarse or unrefined, and she excelled in all the accomplishments of the time; her dancing was perfect, she was a skilled musician, she was clever with her needle, and could express herself gracefully in writing. Her conversation was sprightly, she was full of wit and repartee, and her ready tongue, it may be feared, often led her

into trouble. She had the Frenchwoman's emotional temperament, she was easily depressed and easily elated, and was capable of strong and unreasoning passion. But her instincts were always generous, and she was absolutely free from meanness in thought, word, or deed.

Such a disposition united to a good and wise husband might have been trained into a fine and noble nature. As it was, no man could have been found more unsuitable to her than George Louis; their temperaments were totally dissimilar, it was like the union of cold and heat, of ice and fire. George Louis had his good qualities, too, though somewhat latent, and a tactful and sympathetic wife might have developed them. Poor Sophie Dorothea never even found them, much less developed them. How could she? She and George Louis were utterly unsympathetic, and when two antagonistic chemicals are mixed there is sure to be an explosion sooner or later. But the hearts and inclinations of the young couple were the last things the parents, except Eléonore, thought of in connexion with them.

George William was delighted to play the host again to his favourite brother and his respected sister-in-law. The betrothal was announced with much pomp. There were great feasts at Celle, and every one came to congratulate. All the neighbouring princes, with the exception of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, and all the great officers of both duchies, were delighted at the betrothal. Indeed, the advantages seemed many and obvious, and Eléonore, seeing how strongly the

tide of popular feeling was against her, to say nothing of George William's obstinacy, had perforce to give way, hide her mortification as best she could, and counsel her daughter to submission to the will of her father. It was not an easy task, for Sophie Dorothea had a will and temper of her own, but she was brought to some show of outward complaisance, and induced to passively receive the congratulations of the Court and the unwilling wooing of her betrothed.

George William, Ernest Augustus, and Sophia agreed that, as there was no reason for delay, the marriage should be celebrated as soon as the necessary formalities and settlements were completed. Platen and Bernstorff were called in to help and advise, and lengthy deeds were drawn up. Eléonore seems to have been too heartsick to interfere, or perhaps she was powerless, for in the marriage settlement Ernest Augustus and Sophia had everything their own way, and Sophie Dorothea's interests, apart from her husband and prospective children, were scarcely studied. George William was in so complaisant a mood that the Duke and Duchess of Hanover could ask almost what they liked. He settled to give his daughter one hundred thousand thalers a year, which meant that he handed it all over to the exchequer of Hanover. The estates he had settled on her were also made over, except in the case of certain unlikely contingencies, such as the death of George Louis before his wife. If the Princess were left a widow, she was to be entitled to a dower of twelve

thousand thalers a year. But the whole gist of the settlement was that the Princess, apart from her husband and her children, had no money of her own and no settlement in the modern sense of the term. Of course, she would be given enough to maintain herself in proper state as Princess of Hanover; but her money depended entirely on the good will of her husband and what her parents chose to give her from time to time; she had literally not a penny which she could call her own. Her position was much that of a married woman in England before the passing of the Married Woman's Property Act. The point is important in view of future contingencies.

One stipulation the Duchess Eléonore was able to enforce before the marriage contract was signed: George Louis's intrigue with Madame Busche was a matter of common notoriety, and she insisted that it should be broken off and the mistress sent away from Hanover. This very reasonable request was supposed to be very unreasonable, but Eléonore was firm. Sophie Dorothea had not yet notified her consent in writing, and people were beginning to comment on her downcast looks. The Duke of Celle did not wish it to appear that she was forced into an unwilling marriage, and to humour her and her mother it was promised that Madame Busche should be sent away. The Duchess Sophia, went back to Hanover to see the business carried through. In return for this concession Sophie Dorothea was induced to write the following letter to her aunt; it was merely a formal letter, probably dictated in substance and simply

copied by her. Reading between the lines, we can see the mute protest that runs through it.

"Madame,

"I have so much respect for my lord the Duke your husband, and for my lord my own father, that in whatever manner they may act on my behalf I shall always be very content. Your Highness will do me, I know, the justice to believe that no one can be more sensible than I am of the many marks of your goodness. I will carefully endeavour all my life long to deserve the same, and to make it evident to Your Highness by my respect and very humble service that you could not choose as a daughter one who knows better than myself how to pay to you what is due. In which duty I shall feel very great pleasure, and also in showing you by my submission that I am,

"Madame,

"Your Highness's very humble

"And very obedient servant,

"Sophie Dorothea.

"At Celle, *October* 21, 1682."

The Duchess Sophia probably found in this letter and in the tears and anguish of Eléonore and her daughter some compensation for the effort it cost her to have made the visit to Celle. Of her part in the betrothal she was probably ashamed, for we find her making no mention in her letters to the Duchess d'Orleans of her journey to Celle, but concerning the marriage she wrote as follows :

"Ernest Augustus always had a queer head, and how such an idea could have entered it passes all my understanding. However, one hundred thousand thalers a year is a goodly sum to pocket, without speaking of a pretty wife, who will find a match in my son George Louis, the most pigheaded, stubborn boy who ever lived, and who has round his brains such a thick crust that I defy any man or woman ever to discover what is in them. He does not care much for the match itself, but one hundred thousand thalers a year have tempted him as they would have tempted anybody else."

The marriage contract was signed at Celle by Ernest Augustus and George Louis on the one part and George William and Sophie Dorothea on the other; thus the Princess was induced to sign away not only her liberty, but her fortune, and she became soul and body the property of George Louis. The Duchess Sophia came back from Hanover to be present at the wedding, which was hurried forward with all speed. Great preparations were made for it, and costly presents and congratulations poured in from all sides.

The wedding was celebrated in the private chapel of the Castle of Celle, according to the Lutheran rites, on November 21, 1682, with every circumstance of pomp and ceremony. The town was gaily decorated, the Castle was thronged with distinguished guests; there had never been such a wedding at Celle before. The beautiful little chapel, brilliantly illuminated and bedecked with flowers, presented a scene of unusual

ELIZABETH CHARLOTTE, DUCHESS D'ORLEANS. [*To face p.* 82.

splendour. There were the bride's procession and the bridegroom's procession, and the procession of the parents, and the Court chroniclers exhausted themselves in describing the beauty of the bride, the list of her jewels, the richness of her attire. The bridegroom was scarcely less bravely arrayed. Outwardly all was fair; but within, beneath this brave show, what horror, what anguish, what base and ignoble passions! There were the Duchess Sophia, exulting over the downfall of her enemies, yet with a spice of bitterness in her cup; her husband, the wily and covetous Ernest Augustus; the weak-minded George William; the sad and anxious mother, who could scarcely restrain her tears; the bridegroom muttering the unwilling words, while all the time his heart was with his banished mistress; the child bride, she was little more than a child, pale and unresponsive, sacrificed like another Iphigenia. The omens were unpropitious: there was no sunshine for the bride; the morning dawned dark and gloomy, and during the ceremony a furious storm broke over Celle, and the wind shrieked and raged, shaking the Castle walls. But dark and gloomy though the day was, it was not so dark and gloomy as the bride's heart; and fierce though the tempest, it was not half so fierce as the passions which raged in the breasts of the little group around the altar. There were priests and prayers and benedictions, all the pomp of heraldry and the pageantry of Courts; yet when all was stripped away this marriage was nothing but a shameless bargain, and a young girl's life was sold

to a man steeped in selfishness and profligacy and who did not even make a pretext of loving her. When we are tempted to pass judgment on all that happened after, we must remember that the bride's vows were made half in ignorance, wholly under protest. The outward form was there, the words were spoken; but Love, who hallows the sacrament, was far away, and shuddering hid his holy face.

# CHAPTER VI

## *THE COURT OF HANOVER*

(1682—1684)

> The Court's a golden but a fatal circle,
> Upon whose magic skirts a thousand devils
> In crystal forms sit tempting innocence,
> And beckon early virtue from its centre.[1]
>
> LEE.

THERE were great rejoicings at Hanover in honour of the home-coming of the youthful pair. The marriage was exceedingly popular among all classes, and the people vied with the Court and nobility in celebrating an event which was to contribute so materially to the prosperity of the Duchy. George Louis and Sophie Dorothea entered Hanover in a State coach drawn by six cream-coloured horses and preceded by a military escort, and passed in procession through the decorated streets and shouting multitudes to the Alte Palais (the old palace), where they were to take up their abode. Sophie Dorothea's parting from the home of her childhood had been sad, but her welcome to Hanover was a warm one, and she forgot her sadness in the general rejoicing. Yet a shadow fell across the bride's path on the very threshold of her

new home. Madame Busche, though under orders to quit, had not yet left Hanover, but had the audacity to appear with her sister, Madame Platen, at an upper window of the palace. Tradition says that as George Louis was helping his young wife to alight, she looked up by chance, and saw this Jezebel at the window with her face convulsed with hate. Sophie Dorothea started and turned pale, she guessed instinctively who it was. The Duchess Sophia noticed her too, and was so angry her orders had been disregarded that she sent an imperative message to Madame Busche to leave Hanover that very night. Her mandate was obeyed; but the mischief had been done, and the *contretemps* was an ill-omen for the success of the marriage.

There were loyal addresses and Court festivities, balls, plays, and feastings for a week on end in Hanover, and the bride won golden opinions by her beauty and grace. The events of the last few weeks had tamed her spirit, and she wore an air of timid dignity which, joined to her extreme youth, touched all hearts and even softened at first some of the dislike of her mother-in-law and some of the roughness of her husband. Ernest Augustus was much pleased with Sophie Dorothea, and stood between her and her enemies. Unlike his wife, he had no prejudice against his niece, and he never could resist a pretty face. Now that she had come to him as his daughter-in-law, filling his coffers with her dowry, and adding to the brightness of his Court with her beauty, he was exceedingly well disposed towards her. With all his faults, Ernest

Augustus was no tyrant, but on the whole a kind-hearted man, and throughout Sophie Dorothea's married life at Hanover he was perhaps her best friend, over-indulgent in some things, culpably lax in others, but without the malevolence of his wife or the cold brutality of his son.

To the girl bride, who had been reared under her parents' wing in quiet little Celle, and sheltered from the knowledge of evil, the Court of Hanover, with its meretricious gaiety and brilliance, its laxity of morals and profligacy of manners, must have seemed like another world, and not a better one. The Hanover [1] to which Sophie Dorothea came could not boast of a magnificent Schloss like Celle, but it had three palaces instead of one. There was the Alte Palais, where the young Princess lived at first, an unpretending building in the centre of the town; across the street was the Leine Schloss, where also were apartments for the Royal Family, a larger and more imposing building, used for State functions and entertainments; and half-an-hour's drive outside Hanover lay the country residence of Herrenhausen, a

[1] Hanover is still in some respects the same as it was in the time of Ernest Augustus and Sophia. Until the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign, it must have been almost exactly the same; but the divorce from the English crown which then ensued made a difference, and the expulsion of the King of Hanover, in 1866, brought the town under Prussian rule, and resulted in the abolition of many landmarks. Under the iron heel of Prussia Hanover is losing many of its distinctive features. It has become much like any other modern Prussian city, with wide streets, huge barracks, and enormous and hideous buildings, vast manufactories and breweries. The town has advanced in prosperity, but has lost in picturesqueness.

favourite retreat of the Duchess Sophia, then a modest place, but which she later rebuilt, beautified, and enlarged. To this day Herrenhausen retains its charm. Its quaint, formal gardens with interminable hedges of clipped hornbeam, its colossal fountains and monstrous stucco cupids, its orangery, terraces, and ornamental water, make it unlike anything else in Europe. No wonder the Georges were so fond of it, no wonder they were eager to run away from gloomy London to the delights of this homely little Schloss, nestling in the midst of a great park and approached from the outer world by a long avenue of limes. When we have seen Herrenhausen we can understand the home-sickness of the earlier Georges, and their regret at leaving the cosy delights of their snug little Principality to take up the burden of the uneasy crown of England.

At the Court of Celle there was a comparatively modest retinue, few festivities, and little pomp of State. Hanover, modelled on Versailles, maintained a Court out of all proportion to the importance of the Duchy. The Duchess Sophia, who was a strict upholder of dignity, established in it rigid rules of place and precedence and no herald's table was ever classed more strictly than the different orders of the Court of Hanover. First and foremost, there was the Ducal family—the sacred clan, above, apart, and beyond all meaner mortals. In the second class came the Field-Marshal of the Army, all alone, a sort of buffer between their Serene Highnesses and their subjects. Then followed in the third class, in

THE LEINE SCHLOSS, HANOVER.

[*To face p.* 88.

order meet, the civil and military authorities, the privy councillors and ministers, and generals of the army. The fourth class was made up of the High Chamberlain and the marshals of the Court, and so down to the pages, all of whom were noble. After this class there was a great gulf—the gulf between noble and simple; and then came in array a number of lesser Court officials, gentlemen ushers, physicians, musicians, every one in nicely graduated order, even down to the cooks and footmen, coachmen and grooms. The stables at Hanover were always a feature; they are so to-day, and must have been well worth seeing in Sophie Dorothea's time. They contained some six hundred horses and any number of splendid equipages.

Sophie Dorothea held a high place in all this state, and as Princess of Hanover (as she was formally styled) she was given a separate household. Her apartments were in a wing of the old palace; but she had her own establishment, her chamberlain, her ladies-in-waiting, and her pages. She seldom drove out except in an enormous gilt coach, with postillions and running footmen. We may picture her rumbling through the narrow streets of old Hanover of an afternoon, her pretty, childish, wistful face looking out of the window of the great coach, or driving outside the walls to pay her respects to her haughty mother-in-law at Herrenhausen.

The young Princess found it exceedingly hard at first to accommodate herself to all the formalities and restrictions incidental upon her rank at the Hanoverian Court. She never quite mastered all the minutiæ of

Court etiquette in which the Duchess Sophia revelled ; she would forget, and in her childish, impulsive way, greet a member of the fourth class as though he were a member of the third, or *vice versa*. She followed her own likes and dislikes too much, she was too friendly with one and not friendly enough with the other, she would sometimes withdraw from the Court circle when she was bored, and did not always appear when she was wanted. All this greatly scandalised the Duchess Sophia, who considered Court etiquette the very essence of royalty, and she often wrote to the Duchess d'Orleans, complaining of the bad up-bringing of her daughter-in-law and the way in which her education had been neglected. Of course they both blamed " Madame " of Celle, who, being " a nobody," could not be expected to teach Sophie Dorothea the customs of a Court. Perhaps a little kindness and forbearance on the part of the Duchess Sophia might have taught the young Princess how to carry her dignity even to that female martinet's satisfaction, for she was very adaptive and quick to learn. But the Duchess Sophia showed her no sympathy, and her daughter-in-law's little slips were invariably made the occasion of some slighting remark, either on herself or her mother. It is no wonder, under these circumstances, that Sophie Dorothea grew mutinous and careless, and even took a pleasure in showing her contempt for the rules of etiquette at the Hanoverian Court by wilfully transgressing them whenever she pleased.

The poor little Princess, in these first months of her

married life at Hanover, surrounded by spies and enemies, must often have longed to flee from the hollow splendours of the Court to the home life at Celle and the arms of her loving mother. While all this importance was attached to the outward semblance, no one at Hanover heeded, and no one cared whether she was happy or not. It was hardly possible for her to have been happy. Sophie Dorothea was the victim of one of the cruellest of State marriages, and her only hope of happiness lay in the chance of some love and forbearance on the part of her husband. In these first months of marriage her nature was plastic to her husband's touch. A kind word might have wrought her to love, as a harsh one often drove her to tears and anger. With a little kindness, a little sympathy, all the misery and mistakes of later years might have been averted, but George Louis had no kind words for the daughter of "Madame" of Celle, and even thus early in her married life she was neglected, insulted, and forced through experiences from which her girlish purity recoiled. Even if she had no claim on his affection, she might have had some on his pity. She was all alone and with none to help or advise her, for though Celle was only twenty miles away, the strained relations between the two Courts were not at this date so smoothed over as to admit of much visiting between them, and the means of communication were so bad that her father's principality seemed another country.

Sophie Dorothea had brought with her from Celle a trusted friend, if not a very wise one, in a young

lady, Fräulein Eléonore von Knesebeck, who followed her to Hanover as confidential lady-in-waiting. She was a few years older than the Princess, and the daughter of one of the councillors at Celle, whose name appears as signing the marriage contract between Duke George William and Duchess Eléonore. She was a woman of considerable ability, and though no beauty, had a fair share of good looks. Her devotion to the Princess was beyond doubt, but her discretion, unfortunately, was doubtful indeed, and even in these early days she repeated to Sophie Dorothea many things that would have been better ignored, and incited her against her enemies.

We obtain a fairly good idea of the way in which Sophie Dorothea spent her day from her journals, or diaries, and if her record may be taken as a sample of the life of a German princess at the end of the seventeenth century, there was nothing very edifying or enlivening about it, even in so gay a Court as that of Hanover. The forenoon would be spent by the Princess either in bed (she was not an early riser) or in her apartments writing letters, or working with her needle. If the weather were fine, she might take a walk in the gardens of the Palace, unless it were a morning on which she "took her bath." In that case she kept her room most of the day for fear of a chill; but the bath does not seem to have occurred too frequently.[1]

[1] The morning bath was not a daily institution at the end of the seventeenth century, even with princesses; for aught I know, it may not be in Germany to-day. Cleanliness was not a prominent virtue, and in the long list of servants at the Court of Hanover there appear to have been only two washerwomen employed!

Sophie Dorothea would spend the greater part of the forenoon in dressing, or rather in being dressed—a lengthy operation, for she was fond of attiring herself. When this was over to her satisfaction, attended by her lady-in-waiting, and preceded by a page, she would go down in state to the substantial mid-day dinner, of which her mother has given so vivacious an account. Ernest Augustus would descend in state from his apartments, the Duchess Sophia from hers, with her daughter, Sophia Charlotte. The Prince of Hanover (as George Louis was styled) would arrive; and the younger princes would also appear upon the scene, and, when all were assembled in the great hall, they would sit in order of rank, and the most rigid etiquette prevailed throughout. It must have been a funny sight, the bowing and curtseying, the devouring of great dishes of heavy food, the copious drinking of wine and beer. After the dinner was over, their Highnesses retired to their respective apartments, and very often (not unnaturally) Sophie Dorothea would return to bed for a period. When she arose, if the day were not too far gone, she would take an airing in her gilded coach, or pay some calls on ladies she wished to honour with a visit, or receive some visitors, never alone, always in the presence of her lady-in-waiting. By this time it was necessary to dress again for supper, often an occasion of great ceremony, when rich robes and costly jewels were donned. Again the Prince and Princess would repair to the great hall, and again meet the Duke and Duchess and members of the ducal family in order of rank. When supper was

over, the great personages would join the general circle of the nobility; there might be music and conversation, but more likely they would play cards, ombre, and quadrille, and large sums would be lost and won, for play was high at Hanover in those days. Then the Duchess Sophia and the Princess would retire to their apartments, and the company broke up. The next day, *da capo*. On occasions of importance, as, for instance, the arrival of foreign princes or ambassadors at Hanover (and many arrived at that time, for there was much buying and selling of troops, and many intrigues), there would be more ceremony, larger banquets, balls and comedies and plays. But the above record forms a fair specimen of the average day at the Court of Hanover.

In this way the winter passed. The spring came, the lime trees and acacias flowered along the banks of the river Leine. The summer came and went. There were pastoral plays in the gardens of Herrenhausen, and masques, and visits of princes and princesses. But Sophie Dorothea gradually withdrew herself from the festivities, and with the autumn days there came good news to the Courts of Hanover and Celle. The Princess gave birth to a son and heir, who was born at Hanover on October 30, 1683, and who was destined forty-four years later to ascend the mighty throne of England.[1]

The christening was celebrated with much rejoicing, and the infant was given the names of George Augustus, after his two grandfathers. The event

[1] George II. succeeded his father in 1727.

naturally increased Sophie Dorothea's importance, and it set the seal upon the reconciliation of the Duchies of Hanover and Celle. Henceforward we find the Duke and Duchess of Celle visiting Hanover, and Ernest Augustus and sometimes George Louis, but rarely the Duchess Sophia, returning the visit at Celle, or staying with George William and his wife at their hunting-lodges of Göhre, Brockhausen, and Wienhausen. Sophie Dorothea also visited her parents frequently, and for long intervals.

After the birth of the son and heir, the Duchess Sophia's manner towards her daughter-in-law seems to have altered for the better. She apparently determined to make the best of Sophie Dorothea, and though she never liked her, and had little in common with her, she dissembled her dislike, and treated her with outward courtesy. For good or evil, Sophie Dorothea was her son's wife, and the mother of the child on whom the accumulated dignities of the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg would one day descend. It even seemed that the birth of the son might form a link between George Louis and his wife; such an event surely made for greater identity of interest between them, for a man, unless he be thoroughly bad, can hardly withhold some sympathy from the mother of his firstborn child, and George Louis was by no means wholly bad. He recognised the beauty and grace of his wife, and if they had been left to themselves, the young couple, despite their uncongenial temperaments, might have managed to rub along together fairly well.

But they were not left to themselves; an enemy was on the alert. Sophie Dorothea, by her amiability, had made herself generally popular in Hanover, and, as we have noted, she was especially viewed with favour by her uncle and father-in-law, Ernest Augustus. Her unaffected manners, her innocence and charm, contrasted with the craft and full-blown charms of Madame Platen, were like a cup of cold, pure water after a highly spiced draught; and Ernest Augustus found himself attracted more and more to the society of his daughter-in-law and away from the lures of his mistress. Madame Platen saw this and trembled. Vice always fears innocence, and when she noted the growing influence and importance of Sophie Dorothea, her envy and jealousy were aroused. Yet she had no real cause of complaint. She had been largely responsible for bringing about the marriage, and she had been liberally rewarded for her share in the transaction, possibly by William of Orange, certainly by a commission on the substantial dowry; and in addition to these pecuniary rewards her husband had been raised to the rank of Baron. On the strength of these successes she had launched forth into a costly and extravagant style of living. Her residence at Monplaisir, conveniently situated half way between Hanover and Herrenhausen, was beautified and enlarged until it vied with the ducal palaces; her entertainments were of the most lavish description, her liveries and equipages rivalled those of the Princess of Hanover, while in dress and adornment she far outshone the Duchess Sophia. At Monplaisir

she held a Court hardly second to that of the Duchess and attracted all the gay cavaliers and handsome young nobles of Hanover, who went to bask in the favour of the powerful mistress. High play, deep drinking, and general looseness of conduct were the rule at Monplaisir ; no wonder the young bloods of Hanover found it so attractive !

The Duchess Sophia, true to her policy, steadily ignored all these extravagances on the part of Madame Platen, and continued to seek distraction in the consolations of philosophy and the society of Leibnitz and other learned men, whom, to her honour be it said, she invited to the Court of Hanover. Not so Sophie Dorothea, who was first astounded and then indignant at the impudent display of the Court mistress. Perhaps vanity had something to do with her indignation, for she objected to so many of the young nobles absenting themselves from her quiet little levées to pay their respects to Madame Platen. In youth and beauty the Princess far outshone the more mature Platen, and at the Court functions, splendidly dressed and brilliant with jewels, she was easily first and Madame Platen nowhere. Madame Platen had so long been the leading lady at the Court of Hanover, in fact if not in name, that she could ill brook a rival near her throne, and she had imagined, in her ignorance, that a mere girl like Sophie Dorothea would be amenable to her wishes. But the Princess, though young, and careless enough about etiquette in the ordinary way, was not disposed to abate any jot or tittle of the privileges of her rank and position

in favour of Madame Platen, and quickly intimated to the woman that she must keep her place. Perhaps Sophie Dorothea would have done better to have imitated the policy of her august mother-in-law, and ignored the powerful mistress, but she was young and not altogether wise, and her heart was hot with indignant anger at the woman's arrogance and want of respect to herself. She expressed herself with considerable freedom on the subject, and her remarks, the reverse of complimentary, coming to Madame Platen's ears, incensed her the more against the airs and graces of "the interloper," as she called the Princess. Madame Platen was, in fact, hoisted with her own petard; she had helped to bring Sophie Dorothea to Hanover, only to find her arrayed against her.

When once Madame Platen's jealousy was aroused there were no lengths to which she was not ready to go. First she denounced Sophie Dorothea and her mother as upstarts who had no right to the titles they assumed, but this was old matter, and at the best came second-hand from the Duchess Sophia, therefore it did no harm; then she collected and retailed to Ernest Augustus all the ill-natured gossip she could gather about the Princess, but the Duke pooh-poohed it good-humouredly and would not listen; he was quite ready to excuse his daughter-in-law any little indiscretions on the ground of her youth and good looks, and regarded all this tittle-tattle as mere feminine amenities. Madame Platen next sounded the Duchess Sophia, but that lady

only smiled her inscrutable smile and pursued the even tenor of her way. Failing with the Duke and Duchess, she had recourse to the husband, and with George Louis she was more successful. Like most heavy and slow-witted young men, he was peculiarly sensitive to ridicule. Sophie Dorothea had a nimble wit and a thoughtless tongue, which were ever getting her into trouble, and she sometimes made fun of her husband and his boorish ways, letting fall remarks that had better have been left unsaid. These were retailed to Madame Platen by spies, and reported again by her to George Louis with much embroidery, thus inflaming his mind against his wife. Words followed between them. Neither was blessed with a very good temper, nor had much forbearance. From words they proceeded to open quarrels, which became more and more frequent, and the relations between the young couple were soon strained to the utmost. Madame Platen's next move was to recall her sister, Madame Busche, to Hanover, and throw her once more in the way of George Louis, but this missed its mark. Probably he was inconstant in his amours, and perhaps he had a new favourite; at any rate he refused to be fascinated again by the charms of Madame Busche. Meanwhile, his wife and he drifted more and more apart. By-and-by George Louis turned again to his first love—military service, and the next year or two found him far more in the camp than at the Court. The neglected Sophie Dorothea found consolation in her little son and in frequent visits to her parents at Celle, Brockhausen,

and elsewhere, and spent only a few months of the year under the same roof as her husband.

About this time (1684) there were great festivities at the Court of Hanover, for the Duchess Sophia's match-making proclivities bore fruit in the marriage of her only daughter, Sophia Charlotte, to the Elector of Brandenburg, who later became first King of Prussia. True, the Elector was eleven years older than his bride and a widower, but the Duchess Sophia, did not consider her daughter's inclinations in such a matter as her marriage, especially one so advantageous as this. Sophia Charlotte was the young lady of whom her mother said, when sounded on the subject, "that she was of no religion as yet," and by this marriage her faith was finally settled on the Protestant side. The Electress of Brandenburg seems to have justified this up-bringing, for she was a princess of extremely liberal and advanced views, a free thinker, and lax in her conduct. She had inherited her mother's abilities and also her contempt for Sophie Dorothea. There was never any love lost between them, so the Princess was glad when the Electress of Brandenburg took her departure from Hanover.

# CHAPTER VII

## *THE POWER OF COUNTESS PLATEN*

(1684—1688)

> Trust not the treason of those smiling looks
> Until ye have their guileful brains well tried,
> For they are like unto the golden hooks
> That from the foolish fish their baits do hide.
>
> ED. SPENSER.

SHORTLY after the marriage of his daughter to the Elector of Brandenburg, the Duke of Hanover gave himself a holiday from the cares of State and made another journey to his beloved Italy, where he stayed this time nearly two years. He travelled with much magnificence and a large suite, including the indispensable Madame Platen—and her husband by way of keeping up appearances. Ernest Augustus made his head-quarters at Venice, where he maintained considerable state, which he was now well able to do with the aid of Sophie Dorothea's dowry. Madame Platen was the great lady of this miniature Court, and no doubt Ernest Augustus often regaled her with tales of the merry days which he and George William had spent in the city of the Doges. Brilliant festivities, some of which cost seven or eight thousand

thalers, and a princely liberality, endeared him to the hearts of the nobility and people, and consoled the Venetians for the large subsidies they paid for the two thousand four hundred Hanoverian soldiers Ernest Augustus sold them by agreement in 1684. The Duke of Hanover was shrewd even in his pleasures, and was always ready to do a good stroke of business when the opportunity came his way. He had not much to sell except his soldiers, but they were good fighting men, and fetched a high price in the market,—he sold them like cattle in herds, and squandered the blood-money on his Platens and extravagant living.

Meantime Ernest Augustus's lawful spouse, the Duchess Sophia, was left behind at Herrenhausen to carry on the government of the Duchy, and, what was more difficult, to keep in order the unruly cubs, her sons, who were now growing up to man's estate, and whose only point of resemblance was the hatred they bore to one another in general and their father in particular. They drank, gambled, and swore in the approved fashion of the time, squandered their substance in riotous living, and quarrelled and fought until Hanover became a bear-garden. The Duchess Sophia must have had great trouble with her unruly brood, and it is impossible to withhold pity from her, for she was fond of them. Prince Augustus ("Gustchen"), her second son, was the first to fall into disgrace. We find her writing: "Poor Gus is thrust out, and his father will give him no more keep. I laugh in the day and cry all night about it, for I am a fool with my children." Maternal love was indeed

the soft side of the great Duchess's character. For the rest, she was no doubt glad to be rid of Ernest Augustus and Madame Platen for a while. The latter had made herself so aggressive of late, and raised so many breezes in her quarrels with Sophie Dorothea, that she must have ruffled even the Duchess's serene philosophy. Sophia, too, was greatly interested in affairs in England at this time. Her first cousin, Charles II., was recently dead, and his brother, James II., had ascended his uneasy throne. Sophia heard of Monmouth's ill-starred rebellion, of King James's unwise rule and the rising tide against Popery, of William of Orange's intrigues, and these things absorbed her to the exclusion of lesser annoyances. She paid little or no attention to her daughter-in-law, Sophie Dorothea, who, also forsaken by her husband, remained alone at Hanover; for George Louis had now marched to Hungary to make war on the Turks, with the soldiers ordered from Hanover and Celle to assist the Emperor. When the campaign came to a close, George Louis went to join his father at Venice without returning to Hanover.

Ernest Augustus then bethought himself of Sophie Dorothea, who was having a dull time of it at Hanover shut up with her stern mother-in-law. Ernest Augustus had a tender spot in his heart for his niece, and perhaps he had a twinge of conscience about spending all her money on Madame Platen without giving her any of the fun; perhaps, too, he thought it was time that she and her husband should come together again. They had not met for nearly a year,

and had parted in anger. So he sent General von Ilten, who was in his suite, back to Hanover with instructions to escort the Princess to Venice. Sophie Dorothea was delighted with the prospect of the change ; she packed up her prettiest dresses and jewels, and taking with her Madame von Ilten, the Mistress of the Robes, and Eléonore Knesebeck, her lady-in-waiting, she set forth at once. She arrived in Venice just before the carnival.

Sophie Dorothea was now in her nineteenth year, and every year seemed to add to her beauty. She had warm French blood in her veins, and her spirits rose to overflowing at this opportunity of seeing the world ; it was her first experience of foreign life, and she threw herself into the pleasures of the carnival with a zest that delighted her uncle and slightly shocked the prim Mistress of the Robes. Yet Sophie Dorothea's gaiety was innocent enough ; it was merely the expression of a young girl's delight, and a rebound after having been shut up so long with her grim mother-in-law.

Ernest Augustus, whose taste for pleasure was somewhat dulled by time, was so pleased at the keenness with which his daughter-in-law enjoyed everything, and the praises he heard on all sides of her wit and beauty, that he decided to give her a further treat and take her to Rome for the Easter festivities. Madame von Ilten was unable to accompany the Princess, as her duties as Mistress of the Robes compelled her to return to the Duchess Sophia at Hanover, but Eléonore Knesebeck went

in attendance. Prince George Louis did not travel to Rome with his wife, some trifling difficulty about a point of etiquette arose, he seized it as an excuse, and went to Naples instead.

While she was at Rome Sophie Dorothea met the Marquis de Lassaye, and about their short acquaintance much has been written which has no foundation in fact. Lassaye was a personage. He had served with distinction in the Imperial army against the Turks, and, when the campaign was over, journeyed to Italy like Prince George Louis ; he may have travelled with him. He was a French nobleman, wealthy, and brilliant, and exceedingly given to amours and adventures. Burnet, in his edition of the *Correspondence of the Duchess d'Orleans*, writes of him : " The life of the Marquis de Lassaye was filled with adventures romantic enough to form the substance of a most improbable novel " ; and the *Biographie Universelle* says he was " well known by reason of his birth, his wit, his marriages, his law suits, but still more by an uninterrupted series of love affairs, which occupied the greater portion of an extremely lengthy career." This gay Lothario died in 1738, at the age of eighty-seven, without having experienced any misfortunes, or, as he happily expressed it, " without having unpacked his goods."

The fame of the Marquis de Lassaye was at its zenith when he threw himself across the path of Sophie Dorothea in Rome, and, if we may believe his word, for we have no other evidence, he promptly seized the opportunity to make love to her. Some

fifty years later, before he ended his days in his castle of Lassaye, he made a collection of everything he had written, or was supposed to have written,[1] and had it privately printed by his own press in his castle. In this compilation he inserted thirteen love-letters, which he asserts that he wrote to Sophie Dorothea when she was in Italy ; but none of them are dated, and all are the vague rubbish which in those days formed the stock-in-trade of gallantry. They are couched in extravagant expressions of devotion, but are singularly unconvincing. If we may believe his letters, there was a flirtation between the Princess and the Marquis, Eléonore Knesebeck, acting as a go-between ; the affair was discovered, broken off, and the Princess was admonished, and Lassaye forced to quit Rome. The letters are not worth repeating in full, but the last one he alleges that he wrote to the Princess will serve as a specimen of the rest :

"I do not desire that you should run the risk of ruining yourself by keeping up relations with me : it is better for me to die and for you to live less unhappily. Stop, then, writing to a man who always

[1] This collection is called *Mémoires de Monsieur de Lassaye.* It bears also the better title of *Recueils de différentes choses,* for the parts of which it is composed are very varied and disconnected—love affairs, philosophy, ethics, satire, reflections on various matters, and letters, all jumbled up together. Lassaye had only a few copies of this collection printed for himself and a select circle of friends, so copies are extremely rare and cannot be bought. Herr Edward Bodemann managed to stumble across one in a second-hand book shop in Paris, and to him I am indebted for the perusal of the correspondence in the original French.

brings misfortunes in his train, and whose fates are unpropitious. I have almost lost the habit of sleeping, and am scarcely able to support myself. Why have I been born with such a sensitive heart? Why was I destined to be always unhappy? Suffering seems to be my only lot in the world. Life is a burden to me, and in dying I should be able to secure your peace and happiness. Farewell, dear Princess; I can no longer bear the grief that overwhelms me."

That Lassaye ever sent these letters to the Princess, or even wrote them, is extremely improbable. The letters did not see the light until fifty years later, when the woman whom he slandered was dead, and unable to refute his accusations, and it is unlikely he made copies when he wrote them and kept them all that time. To what end? It would have been more to the point if he could have published the letters he alleges he received from Sophie Dorothea, but his audacity stopped short at the point of forgery. He was an exceedingly vain and garrulous person, fond of boasting of his conquests with the fair sex, and, if we may believe him, half the princesses of Europe had capitulated to his fascinations. The high rank, beauty, and romantic history of Sophie Dorothea made him desirous of adding her to his list, and he deliberately exaggerated a passing acquaintance to suit his purpose. The truth seems to be this. Sophie Dorothea was flattered by the homage of the brilliant Frenchman. She may perhaps have coquetted with him a little after

the fashion of the time—that is to say, she may have listened to his pretty speeches and laughed at his sallies. But when she saw he was likely to put a false construction upon her amiability, and take advantage of her good nature, she nipped the acquaintance in the bud and dismissed him abruptly. Lassaye, with all the pettiness of a small mind, cherished against the Princess a grudge for the blow she had inflicted upon his vanity, and revenged himself by composing bogus letters.

After a few months in Italy, Sophie Dorothea returned to Hanover, and settled down again to her routine life. The following year (1686) she gave birth to a daughter, who was christened Sophie Dorothea, after her mother, and who, in years to come, married her cousin, the King of Prussia, and became mother of Frederick the Great.

It would seem that the birth of a daughter instead of a son was in some sense a disappointment to the Ducal Family of Hanover, though why poor Sophie Dorothea should be blamed it is not easy to see. The event certainly did not tend to increase her prestige, as the birth of George Augustus had done; and her husband, who was now home again, became more indifferent and colder than ever. In these two children, for she bore no more, Sophie Dorothea found all the happiness she experienced in her unhappy married life. Some of this unhappiness, it must be admitted, she deliberately provoked. Though she did not love her husband, she was furiously jealous of his amours with other women,

THE ALTE PALAIS, HANOVER. [*To face p.* 108.

and resented the presence of his favourites in proximity to herself. The little Hanoverian Court was a very hot-bed of intrigue, a nest of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, and the more we look into it the more we can understand the philosophic policy of the Duchess Sophia, who ignored and kept aloof from it all. No doubt she chose the better part, though it seems a somewhat unnatural one, for interference would have been useless, and by abstaining she preserved her dignity. Sophie Dorothea was different. At the outset she made an enemy of Madame Platen, and met gibe with gibe and intrigue with intrigue. Of course she had the worst of the duel; it was like a fight between a hawk and a dove. She was no match for the older woman, who thwarted her at every turn, and grew daily in authority and arrogance. About this time Ernest Augustus advanced Platen to the title of Count, and his wife blossomed into a countess. Her power was now so great that even the stoutest of her foes feared to provoke her, and lesser obstacles were simply swept out of her path.

As an illustration may be quoted the case of the abigail Ilse. Court ladies in those days had often in their household an attendant who filled the middle distance between the servants and the mistress. Ilse occupied this ambiguous position with the Countess Platen, and a very hard time she must have had of it. She was young and fairly good-looking, and probably not too strict in her views of right and wrong. Duke Ernest Augustus was in the habit of consulting his Prime

Minister's wife far more frequently than his Prime Minister, and whiled away many an hour in her congenial society at Monplaisir. As a rule he sent her notice of his intention of coming to see her, but one fine afternoon, as he drove back from Herrenhausen, he thought he would pay the Countess a surprise visit. He entered Monplaisir by the garden door unannounced. The Countess was absent, but under the trees was the abigail Ilse, whom Ernest Augustus had never seen. The Duke could not resist the temptation of a few words with a young and pretty woman, and insisted that the abigail should not withdraw. Ilse remained, and was laughing and talking with the Duke, when suddenly the Countess Platen came upon them like a whirlwind. The Countess curbed her rage for the moment, and confined herself to an expression of astonishment that Ilse should have had the impertinence to thrust her company upon the august presence of His Highness. She bade the abigail begone, and then, no doubt, gave Ernest Augustus a piece of her mind on his lack of dignity and good taste.

Whatever may have taken place between these exalted personages, one thing is certain ; Ilse was dismissed from Countess Platen's service with every mark of ignominy. Nor did her punishment end here. The following week Ernest Augustus went to Osnabrück, and the moment his back was turned the Countess Platen clapped the unfortunate abigail into the common gaol, or rather that part of it which was a sort of "spinning house." The fact that a woman without any trial

should be dragged off to prison on a trumped-up charge shows how powerful Countess Platen was in Hanover; her word seems to have been as good as the Duke's sign manual. Ilse was kept in prison some time, and then "dry drummed" (a sort of seventeenth-century rough music) out of Hanover as a woman of loose character, dangerous to public morals. The girl found herself without the walls, friendless and penniless. In this plight she appealed to Ernest Augustus, but that volatile Prince had already forgotten her, or was afraid to arouse the ire of Countess Platen. He sent her a small present of money, and cynically counselled her to give Hanover a wide berth in future. Ilse then made her way to Celle, and laid her sad case before the Duchess Eléonore, no doubt expatiating upon Countess Platen's enormities and her intrigues against Sophie Dorothea. The Duchess of Celle, after sifting the facts of the case, took Ilse into her employment, and found her an asylum in the castle. Countess Platen resented the Duchess's action as a personal insult to herself, and she was the more enraged against her and Sophie Dorothea. So the quarrel grew.

At the Court of Hanover, as we have seen, there were plots and counterplots; in addition to the women's squabbles, father was arrayed against son and son against father, and brother against brother. Among the unruly sons of Ernest Augustus, Sophie Dorothea had her friends, and the young princes for the most part hated Countess Platen quite as much as she did. Of them all, Maximilian was the most

ungovernable, and had an unlimited capacity for getting into scrapes. Though well preserved, Countess Platen was by this time past her first youth, and she had recourse to divers means to heighten her charms, milk baths, artificial roses, and cosmetics. The rouge-pot, like dram-drinking, grows with habit, and the lady's cheeks became so ruddy that they were the byword of the Court. There was a quaint conceit that the water peas were boiled in was an infallible test of rouge, and the monkeyish Max, having a grudge against the Countess, procured a bottle of this decoction from the kitchen, and on the occasion of a Court ceremonial, when she appeared in full war paint, he squirted some in her face, with the result that she had to retire amid the suppressed titters of the assembly. The Countess, boiling with rage, complained to Ernest Augustus, and the offender was severely reprimanded and locked up in his room for many days. The punishment was not a heavy one, but it served to engender bad blood between the father and son, and after he was liberated we find Maximilian intriguing with his two brothers, Augustus and Charles, against his eldest brother, George Louis, and his father.

Ernest Augustus's great desire was to add to the lustre of the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg. To this end he sought to unite the Duchies of Celle and Hanover, and he established primogeniture. He made his eldest son heir to all lands and territory, and only allotted to his other sons moderate sums of money whereby to support their dignity. This

policy was the opposite to that pursued by his ancestors and by most of the German princes of his time, who in their wills were in the habit of dividing their territory among all their sons. It is no wonder, therefore, that the younger princes of Brunswick-Lüneburg disliked the innovation, protested noisily against it, and intrigued for its overthrow. The Duchess Sophia also disliked it. The disaffection was this time nipped in the bud by the vigilance of Countess Platen, who tried to implicate Sophie Dorothea in the plot, but nothing could be proved against her. It is possible that she had a hand in it, for the terms of her marriage settlement, which practically cut her off from inheriting territory, and left her at the mercy of her husband, were so unfavourable that she might be pardoned if she tried to alter them to her advantage.

These things did not tend to improve Sophie Dorothea's position at the Court of Hanover. Her best friend, Ernest Augustus, suspected her of intriguing against him, and George Louis disliked her the more because he thought she wished to upset the marriage settlement ; except Eléonore Knesebeck, she had not a friend to whom she could turn. It is hard to imagine a more difficult position, but her cup of suffering was not yet full.

Mention has been made of the unsuccessful efforts of Countess Platen to enamour George Louis again with her sister, Madame Busche, who had now returned to Hanover a widow. It was the policy of Countess Platen to widen the breach between George Louis

and Sophie Dorothea by every possible means, and, knowing the young Princess's jealous disposition, she felt that the most efficacious way to prevent a reconciliation would be to engage the Prince in another intrigue. Madame Busche having ceased to charm, she must find some one else. The lady whom she chose as a decoy was Ermengarda Melusina von Schulenburg,[1] the daughter of an illustrious and noble house, who might have been capable of better things. But Ermengarda Melusina, not being over endowed with this world's goods, was anxious to settle herself, honourably if she could, dishonourably if no other chance offered, according to the custom of the time. The young lady had only recently arrived at Hanover, and had stayed at Monplaisir. Countess Platen took her up, presented her at Court, and established her there as a lady-in-waiting. Ermengarda Melusina seemed of a docile and confiding disposition, and Countess Platen thought she would find in her a willing tool; but though she made no pretensions to wit, and was slow of speech, she was shrewd, more shrewd than her chaperone gave her credit. In appearance she was the opposite to Sophie Dorothea; her features were of the heavy German type, and she was of gigantic height (the Duchess Sophia called her "the tall Malkin"); but, *en revanche*, she was only nineteen, had good features, large blue eyes, fair hair, and a fine figure. The Countess introduced her to George Louis on his return from Hungary. As he was short himself, he admired tall women, and was

[1] Many years later Duchess of Kendal.

much struck by Ermengarda Melusina's large and placid charms, and began to pay her marked attention. He was seen with her everywhere, riding with her in the hunting-field, seated next to her at the play, and leading her out at the dance. His wife was openly neglected for this new rival.

To do Ermengarda Melusina justice, she was not spiteful nor aggressive, nor desirous in any way to injure Sophie Dorothea. At first she hung back from the glittering prospect before her, but being very poor, and, as subsequent history proves, very avaricious, she did not hold out long, and then surrendered at discretion.

About this time the Countess Platen consoled Madame Busche for the loss of her power over the Crown Prince by marrying her in second wedlock to General Weyke, who must indeed have been a bold man, for Busche had only been dead a few months, and it was well known that his death had been accelerated by his wife's extravagance, bad temper, and misconduct. Probably Weyke was induced to marry the widow on the strength of promises of promotion.

Countess Platen resolved to make her sister's nuptials the occasion of proclaiming, more or less informally, George Louis's infatuation for Schulenburg, and with a refinement of cruelty she tried to induce Sophie Dorothea to be present. Though Sophie Dorothea always treated Countess Platen with coldness, that lady maintained the semblance of respect for the rank, if not the person, of the Princess, and

she waited upon her to invite her to the wedding festivities, and in the course of the interview dropped many hints and veiled taunts wrapped up in the cloak of flattery. Sophie Dorothea had the good sense to keep her temper. She declined the invitation on the plea of ill-health, but said that she would send Eléonore Knesebeck to represent her. The wedding was celebrated with much splendour at General Weyke's country residence a few miles from Hanover. After the ceremony there was a banquet, and dancing followed in the evening. The Prince of Hanover honoured the occasion with his presence, and so did his brothers, who, though they hated Countess Platen, were ready to go anywhere to enjoy themselves; but neither the Duchess Sophia nor the Princess was present. Eléonore Knesebeck was there to represent the latter. The great personages at the feast, far eclipsing the bride and bridegroom, were Ermengarda Melusina, decked in jewels, and her lover, George Louis, who paid her so much attention that every one noticed it, and, when he lead her forth to the dance, General Weyke and his bride had to take a second place at their own festivities. When Knesebeck returned to the palace she found Sophie Dorothea waiting up for her in great agitation; nor was she content until she had had a recital of the whole affair, and learned that she was openly flouted in the capital of the Duchy.

From this time George Louis's amour with Ermengarda Melusina assumed a recognised phase. She was sumptously lodged, and he visited her daily, and spent

most of his time with her. In this he was only imitating his father, and, when all was said and done, Schulenburg was much less offensive than Platen. Unlike her mother-in-law, Sophie Dorothea writhed and raged under her husband's infidelity, but she could obtain no redress. The Duchess Sophia, true to her policy, declined to interfere, and to appeal to Ernest Augustus was useless ; in her despair she turned to Celle, and made complaint to her parents. From her mother, who was helpless, she got both love and sympathy ; from her father she got neither. A change had come over the spirit of George William's dream, for Bernstorff had plied him with many tales to the detriment of his wife and daughter. So he bade Sophie Dorothea to keep her place, imitate the example of her estimable mother-in-law, and ignore such trifles, and he further exhorted her to be more amenable to her husband, and not to give way to temper. Thus repulsed in the quarter where she looked for help, the unhappy Princess knew not where to turn ; she was friendless and alone, unguided and unaided, ready to seize at any means of avenging her wounded pride. At this juncture her evil genius came upon the scene in the person of Philip Christopher, Count Königsmarck.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *ENTER KÖNIGSMARCK*

(1688—1689)

. . . he seem'd the goodliest man
That ever among ladies ate in hall.

TENNYSON.

COUNT PHILIP CHRISTOPHER KÖNIGSMARCK had led an adventurous life since the day when, a handsome youth, he parted from the Princess at Celle, ten years before. He had grown to man's estate, travelled far and wide, been through dare-devil adventures and hairbreadth escapes, and distinguished himself for audacity in many adventures and gallantry in many Courts. He came to Hanover with the reputation of being a brilliant, dashing young nobleman, a reputation which his wealth and personal beauty did much to heighten.

Count Philip Christopher Königsmarck was the second son of a Swedish nobleman, the famous General Count Königsmarck, who was killed at the siege of Bonne in 1673, leaving behind him two sons and two daughters. Of the elder son more anon. The elder daughter, Amalie Wilhelmina, had married Count Lewenhaupt ; the younger, Marie Aurora, was still

unwed, and was distinguished through Europe for her grace and beauty. She was then in her first youth ; her subsequent adventures at the Courts of Dresden, Sweden, and elsewhere would fill volumes.[1]

The family of Königsmarck was a curious product of the seventeenth century, and, to judge them correctly, one must weigh them by the standards of their time : they were wealthy, endowed with great beauty, and of noble birth, and, had they been so minded, could have lived and died in their native land honoured and respected by all. But the spirit of adventure was in their blood. The brothers were military adventurers, and the sisters Court favourites, to use no harsher word, and they each and all of them were conspicuous figures at the most brilliant Courts of Europe. Most of the beautiful adventuresses of this period were the daughters of poor noblemen. But the Countesses Königsmarck could not plead poverty for embarking on their glittering and eventful careers ; with them, as with their brothers, the incentives must have been the spirit of restlessness pure and simple, the passion for display, and the love of notoriety, which through all ages have been powerful attractions to men and women of their temperament.

The elder brother, Count Carl John Königsmarck, began his travels when quite a boy. He accompanied his uncle, the celebrated Count Otho William, sometime Field-Marshal of France, and afterwards Governor

[1] They have done so : Palmblad's *Aurora Königsmarck*, published in Swedish and German, Leipsig, 1852, gives a full account of her adventurous career in six volumes.

of Swedish Pomerania, on a tour through the greater part of Europe. He visited England in 1674. Soon after we find him figuring at the Court of Versailles. Later he joined an expedition of the Knights of Malta against the Turks, when he nearly cut short his promising career by tumbling into the sea; but he was dragged out half drowned, for the Königsmarck family, like cats, appeared to have nine lives. Later we find him at Rome, Venice, and Genoa, and then proceeding through Portugal to Spain. At the Court of Madrid he was an honoured guest, and figured with great *éclat* at the festivities consequent on the marriage of the King. During these festivities he took part in a bull-fight, wherein he distinguished himself by his quickness and courage, and again met with an accident which nearly cost him his life. He was badly gored by a bull, but, bleeding and wounded, continued to fight until he was carried fainting out of the arena. The Spanish ladies were delighted with his pluck, and unanimously declared him to be one of the most gallant cavaliers that had ever visited the Court of Madrid. After these experiences he returned to Sweden for a time.

He found there Philip Christopher, his younger brother, who had returned to the family nest from the Court of Celle, where his presence was no longer welcome. It was resolved to send him to England to complete his education, and Carl John, who had been in England before, undertook the charge of his young brother. The two brothers sailed from Gothenburg, in 1681, and, after a rough voyage, landed

at Hull. Count Carl John presented himself at the Court of Charles II., bearing with him a letter of introduction from the King of Sweden. The fame of his exploits had travelled before him, and the merry monarch cordially welcomed so distinguished a gallant, and appears to have taken a great liking to him. Carl John at once plunged into the gaieties of the dissipated English Court. His younger brother, Philip Christopher, was lodged in London, and sent to attend Foubert's Academy in the Haymarket, a celebrated school of arms in that day. A man named Hanson was engaged to act as his tutor and watch over his morals in the gay metropolis, and, in the intervals of his military training at Foubert's, to prepare him for entering the University of Oxford.

The rank and fortune of these distinguished youths and the favour of the Court naturally gave them access to the great houses of England, and we find them on terms of intimacy with the highest of the nobility. This was especially true of the elder brother, who became a general favourite, and won the favour of many of the Court beauties. But the Swedish noble sought more substantial advantages. Through the Dowager Countess of Northumberland he became acquainted with her young daughter, the Countess of Ogle, who was one of the great heiresses of the day. This lady was by birth Lady Elizabeth Percy, orphan daughter and heiress of the eleventh Earl of Northumberland. She was married to Henry Cavendish, Earl of Ogle, son of the Duke of Newcastle, when only eleven years old, according to the evil practice

of giving heiresses in wedlock when mere children; but, because she was so young, she never lived with her husband. He died after his marriage year, leaving his countess the bulk of his fortune, and a greater prize than ever. The unfortunate child appeared in widow's weeds at the Court of Charles II., and was known as *La triste héritière*. She had few pretensions to beauty, and suffered from the fact that her hair was bright red, which in those days was not admired, so she was given the additional nickname of "the Countess Carrots."

Count Carl John Königsmarck resolved to win this prize, and paid his court to her assiduously. Despite her precocious training, Lady Ogle was too young to know her own mind; but she seems to have been attracted to her Swedish suitor favourably, and would probably have yielded to his pleading had not her family discouraged his suit. Count Carl John came with the strongest credentials, and the King's favour to boot, but the Dowager-Countess of Northumberland, who shared the prevalent prejudice against foreigners, sternly refused to hear a word in his favour, and shut the door in his face.

Incensed at his unceremonious rejection, the Count turned his back on England for a time. The spirit of military adventure being strong within him, he attached himself to an expedition against the Moors, and fought at Tangiers with great bravery. The war was of short duration, and a peace having been patched up with the Moors, the restless Count next joined a cruise against the Algerines. While he was thus

engaged, news came which determined him to return to England without delay. Though rejected by Lady Ogle's guardians, he had by no means given up the idea of winning her, and hoped by distinguishing himself in the wars to strengthen his suit; she was still so young that they could afford to wait a while, and doubtless he felt that his doughty deeds would make her heart grow fonder. Whether they did so or not mattered little, for her heart was the last thing that Lady Ogle's guardians took into consideration; they felt the care of the child heiress a great responsibility, and resolved to settle her safely as soon as possible. Therefore, in Count Carl John's absence, they married her privately, much against her will, to a country gentleman, Mr. Thomas Thynne, of Longleat, in Wiltshire, commonly called "Tom of Ten Thousand" from his wealth, ten thousand a year in those days being considered an immense fortune. The match was a suitable one as regards money and position, but in other respects it was disastrous. Thynne was a young man of debauched habits, a notorious *roué*, whom Dryden lampooned as Issachar in his *Absalom and Ahithophel*. This marriage, like the previous one, was never consummated. The pair separated immediately the ceremony was concluded, and the young bride fled to Holland to escape from her second husband. She was then only fourteen years old!

Count Carl John took upon himself the *rôle* of champion of the distressed damsel; he considered that he had been tricked and the lady betrayed, and by some crooked piece of reasoning he persuaded himself

that if he could only get Thynne out of the way he would secure the heiress and the fortune for himself. Full of this intent he arrived in London early in 1682, accompanied by a Captain Vratz, a dare-devil fellow who had followed him in all his campaigns, and was absolutely devoted to his interests. This time the Count did not present himself at Court, but took private lodgings and remained hidden, on account, he afterwards said, of some skin disease he had picked up in Morocco which made him unfit to appear in public. He saw no one but his younger brother, Philip Christopher, who was still pursuing his studies at Foubert's Academy, and Vratz. It is impossible to say what dark schemes were hatched in Carl John's lodgings, but we know for certain that Vratz, who was a noted duellist, tried to fasten a quarrel upon Thynne, but that gentleman declined his challenge and refused to meet him. Vratz was determined to encompass his destruction, and, since he could not kill him in what was known as an "honourable way," he hired two swashbucklers, Lieutenant Stern, a needy rogue, and Borosky, a Pole, who had come from Sweden with horses for Count Carl John, to act as his seconds or confederates, and again endeavoured to provoke his adversary. But Thynne obstinately refused to come out, and, failing in his endeavour to murder him legally, Vratz determined to dispatch him in some other way. It chanced in this wise. One afternoon, just when the dusk was falling, Thynne was driving in Pall Mall with his boon companion, the Duke of Monmouth.

He put the Duke down at his lodging, and drove on, but his coach had not proceeded more than a few yards when it was stopped by three mounted men, one of whom, Vratz, seized the horses, another, Stern, knocked down the postillion, and the third, Borosky, thrust a blunderbuss in at the coach window and discharged it at Thynne. The three desperadoes then made off, leaving their victim so dangerously wounded that he died in a few hours. There was a great hue and cry. The position and wealth of the murdered man, and the fact that such a deed had been committed openly in a frequented thoroughfare like Pall Mall, was too much even for those times. The law was invoked at once, and the three assassins were captured and thrown into gaol to await their trial. Count Carl John was arrested as an accessory before the fact. He denied that he had any knowledge of the murder, but arms were found at his lodgings; it was proved that he had made inquiries as to Thynne's whereabouts, and it was even hinted that the young lady, anxious to be rid of her obnoxious husband, secretly encouraged him. There does not seem to be any proof of this slander. Lady Ogle (or Elizabeth Thynne) was a girl, and absent abroad; that she may have wished to be rid of her husband is likely, and, under the circumstances, natural, but it is impossible to believe that she connived at his murder.

The trial took place in February, 1682, and was one of the most celebrated trials of the reign, equalling in interest, if not importance, the notorious Popish

plots. The whole town was in a ferment, and for days nothing else was talked about. The murdered man had many friends of influence and position, who were determined to bring his assassins to the gallows, and popular opinion was with them. On the other hand, the King's influence was known to be in favour of Count Carl John; he had come to him with an introduction from the King of Sweden, and he was unwilling that so distinguished an ornament of Courts and so brave a soldier should end his days by means of the common hangman. Among the witnesses for the defence was Philip Christopher's tutor, from whose evidence may be gleaned many particulars of the younger brother's sojourn in England: for instance, that he had been sick of the ague, that he had been on visits to certain of the nobility, that he was about to leave Foubert's Academy and go to Oxford, and lastly, that he, a distinguished foreigner, had been brought to England to be instructed in the Protestant religion and a proper knowledge of our free and enlightened institutions,—this point was supposed to carry great weight with the jury. Young Philip Christopher also gave evidence in his brother's defence. The judge could not understand why Borosky had come over from Sweden. Philip Christopher said that his brother had sent for him because he was a great judge of horses, and he wished to buy some, not only for himself, but for him. "My lord," said he, "I had a bill of exchange." "For how much money, my lord?" inquired the Lord Chief Justice

PHILIP CHRISTOPHER COUNT KÖNIGSMARCK. [*To face p.* 126.

(*At the time of his visit to England.*)

Pemberton. "For a thousand pistoles to buy horses, and he has bought one horse and wants to buy more." This testimony, preposterous though it may seem, carried weight with the Lord Chief Justice, who evidently had a hint from the King. In his summing up he greatly favoured Count Carl John Königsmarck, and the result was a verdict of "Guilty" against the three desperadoes, but "Not Guilty" against Carl John. The Count thus escaped by the skin of his teeth; and, when he heard the verdict, there was a scene in court, for the acquitted man had the audacity to exclaim, "God bless the King and his honourable Bench!" whereat followed great uproar.

The three accomplices were hanged in chains. Count Carl John, though he saved his neck, ruined his reputation in England. The tide of feeling was strongly against him. The King plainly told him that he could do no more, and the coldness of the Court, the hostility of the nobility, and the threats of the populace combined to make him quit England for ever. He repaired to the Court of Versailles, where his recent experiences rather added to his reputation than otherwise. While there he had the audacity to renew his suit to Lady Ogle (or Elizabeth Thynne), now widowed for the second time, but she would have nothing more to do with him. She probably felt, and rightly, that to marry such a man would be to implicate herself in his crime. She went into mourning for her husband—or, rather, "did not appear public," as the phrase went—for some six or seven

weeks; she then returned to England, and married Charles Seymour, third Duke of Somerset, and added her colossal fortune to his. The marriage was on the whole a happy one, and she and the Duke were important and powerful personages at the Court of Queen Anne.[1]

Count Carl John returned to his estates in Sweden, but he could not brook the quiet of country life, and soon plunged again into the dangerous delights of war. War in those days was a game at which emperors, kings, and military adventurers played for a pastime, the soldiers being the pawns in the game. Carl John was wounded at the siege of Cambray; he then followed his regiment to Spain, and distinguished himself at the siege of Verona. The last stage of his eventful career was when, in 1686, he went with his uncle, Otho William, to the Morea; he took part

[1] The Duchess of Somerset's character was above reproach. She was one of the most virtuous matrons at the Courts of William and Mary and of Anne; but party feeling ran high in England, and Swift's bitter pen tried to make her out an assassin at the age of fourteen—that is to say, he endeavoured to implicate her in the murder of Thomas Thynne. He thus attacked her in a series of preposterous puns, which he addressed as an ode to Queen Anne:

> England, dear England, if I understand,
> Beware of *carrots* from Northumberland.
> Carrots sown thin (Thynne) a deeper root may get
> If so be they are in summer set (Somerset).
> They cunning's mark (Königsmarck) thou, for I have been told
> They assassine when young, and poison when old.
> Root out those carrots, O thou whose name
> Spelled backward and forward is always the same!

This was Anne, who sometimes wrote her name "Anna," and the allusion to "carrots" referred to the red hair of the Duchess of Somerset.

in divers sieges and battles, and so exerted himself that he brought on an attack of pleurisy, of which he died.[1]

Though Count Philip Christopher Königsmarck (now, by the death of his brother, Count Königsmarck,) had nothing to do with the murder of Thynne, yet this untoward event influenced his fortunes not a little. The name of Königsmarck had become so odious in England after this affair that, despite the young Count's admitted innocence, the Court could not be brought to look upon him with favour, and so he abandoned the idea of going to Oxford and left England for France. He was at Versailles some time; he then travelled through France and other countries. This was a period of peace in the history of Europe; the great war which was concluded by the treaty of Ryswick was not begun until some years later (1689), and so there was no opening for Königsmarck's military talents. It is not easy to follow his career during this period, but on leaving France he seems to have gone to the Court of Dresden, and proceeded with his military studies, and while there to have formed a friendship with Prince Frederick Augustus of Saxony (Augustus the Strong), and to have accompanied him on his travels in Spain, Portugal, and Italy. We know that he was in Venice, and probably other parts of

[1] We have dwelt thus on the career of Count Carl John Königsmarck because Horace Walpole and other chroniclers have fallen into the error of confounding him with his younger brother, Philip Christopher; and Horace Walpole even goes so far as to describe Philip Christopher in his *Reminiscences of the Court of George II.*, as the murderer of Thynne, which he certainly was not.

Italy, about this time, and we find him figuring in his own letters as carrying on a *liaison* with a beautiful Italian lady connected with literature.[1]

From 1682 (the date of the famous trial) to 1688 Königsmarck's career is involved in uncertainty. One thing, however, is certain, that he appeared in Hanover on March 12, 1688. This we learn from the records of the Hanoverian Marshal von Malortie.[2] Herein it is stated that Königsmarck was present at an entertainment given by the Prince and Princess of Hanover on the occasion of some public festival. Before this date there is no mention of his name in any contemporary records of Hanover, and after this it occurs frequently; we are therefore justified in supposing that Königsmarck did not appear at Hanover before 1688. The point is important, more important than appears at first sight, because it has been stated that Königsmarck was in Hanover at an earlier date than 1688, and formed an intimacy with Sophie Dorothea before the birth of her daughter, thereby casting doubts on the legitimacy of her daughter, afterwards Queen of Prussia, and so upon the Imperial House of Germany. But there is no proof whatever (everything points the other way) that Königsmarck was in Hanover before 1688, two years *after* the birth of the Princess.

We may take it, there being no evidence to the contrary, that Königsmarck's appearance at the Prince's

[1] *Vide* Cramer's *Memoirs of the Countess Aurora Königsmarck.*

[2] Published in Hanover, 1847, under the title of *Der Hannöversche Hof.*

festival was synonymous with his arrival at the Court of Hanover and on this occasion he first met the Princess, Sophie Dorothea, again, after ten years. Many changes had taken place. When they had parted she was little more than a child, and it can hardly be supposed that their youthful intimacy had left any deep impression on her mind.[1] With Königsmarck it seems to have been different. If we may believe his asseverations later, he loved the Princess as a child, and never ceased to love her all his life long, even when his cause seemed most hopeless. On this occasion—their first meeting after many years—there was no hint of his feelings ; he paid his homage to the Princess of Hanover with the formal respect due to her rank, though he probably recalled to her the days they had spent together at Celle. She greeted him with pleasure as an old friend and an acquisition to the Court circle, and in this latter view she was supported by Ernest Augustus, who was always glad to welcome distinguished strangers to Hanover, especially when they had money.

Witty and accomplished, and withal generous and

[1] The fact that Sophie Dorothea and Königsmarck were children together is proved by a reference to the printed report of the judicial inquiry with regard to Fräulein von Knesebeck, tried before the Vice-Chancellor Hugo and Count Platen. In pages 76-86 appear these questions :

"How long is it that the Count and the Princess have loved each other ?" The answer was : "They have loved each other from childhood. The Countess Rens (? Reuss) has related to me that when they were yet children they loved." "How old were they then ?" "Nine or ten years." "And they always loved each other ?" "Yes, that was always so, and thus he came to this Court to serve."

given to hospitality, Königsmarck soon became one of the most popular gallants about the Court. He did not omit, like all the young nobles, to pay his respects to the powerful Countess Platen at Monplaisir, and she, on her part, was much impressed with his handsome person and dashing manners. The fact that Countess Platen was attracted to Königsmarck would not render him more agreeable to the eyes of Sophie Dorothea, and it may be doubted whether in that year (1688) the Princess saw much of him, though he was at Hanover for some time.

Ill-treated and rebuffed on all sides, Sophie Dorothea's troubles had begun to tell upon her health ; the Prince neglected her more and more for Schulenburg, often not coming near her for weeks at a time. Sophie Dorothea felt this slight keenly, and one day visited her husband in his apartments and demanded an explanation of his coldness and neglect. Was it due to any fault on her part ? she asked pitifully, because if so she would endeavour to regulate her conduct to his wishes. But George Louis would not give her any explanation, and ordered her out of the room. Sophie Dorothea's temper was never much under control, and she lost it altogether at this rude rebuff. High words ensued between the unhappy pair ; they had a more violent quarrel than ever before, and it was said that George Louis used personal violence to expel her from his presence. When at last the Princess returned to her apartments her agitation was so great that it brought on a nervous prostration, and some say a miscarriage. For some time she

was confined to her bed, and so ill that the Duchess Sophia, who generally held aloof and ignored her, interposed on behalf of the neglected wife. The Duchess Sophia did not view the Schulenburg affair with any favour, and reprimanded her son so severely that George Louis was forced for a time to pay his wife some attention—that is to say, he would come and sit by her bedside for a few minutes, and sullenly inquire after her health.

When Sophie Dorothea rallied a little, the Duchess Sophia took her off to Herrenhausen with her children, and paid her every care and attention: this at least must be noted to her credit. It was probably during this period that the Duchess gave her daughter-in-law those long lectures on English history which Poellnitz describes with such unconscious humour.[1] They lasted hours at a stretch, and poor Sophie Dorothea had to listen to the end, though often tired and bored, for she had not the same interest in English affairs as her mother-in-law. Sometimes she seems to have dropped a hint to this effect, for we find the Duchess Sophia rebuking her want of interest, and telling her it was necessary that she should know the history of a country over which she might one day be called to reign as Queen Consort, and, if so, she trusted she would do her duty. This provoked Sophie Dorothea's retort that if ever she were Queen of England she hoped she would have

[1] *Histoire Secrette de la Duchesse d Hanover, Épouse de Georges Premier*, etc., said to be written by the Baron von Poellnitz. Published in French, London, 1732.

more sense than to run away and leave the crown as King James had done ; for the flight of King James and the accession of William and Mary had just then astonished Europe, and were events especially agitating the mind of King James's first cousin, Sophia, whose sympathies at this period were secretly with the exiled monarch and his family, notwithstanding the ties of self-interest.[1]

After a time some sort of wretched truce was patched up between the ill-mated couple, probably through the mediation of the Duchess Sophia, and Sophie Dorothea returned to her apartments in the Old Palace and to outward union with her husband.

Königsmarck had then left Hanover for a period. The death of his uncle, Count Otho William, in the latter part of 1688, called him to Italy, and in the February of the following year we find him attending the splendid obsequies of that distinguished relative at Venice, for Count Otho William was not buried until many months after he died. By his brother's death Königsmarck had become a rich man ; by his uncle's death he became one of the wealthiest noblemen in Europe, and the splendour of his equipages, the lavishness of his entertainments, and his reputation for gallantry made him an acquisition to any Court. He was one of Fortune's favourites : born in the purple, entering upon a large inheritance while yet a young man, he had the opportunity of making the most of the good gifts Fortune

[1] In King William's chest was found a large bundle marked "The Electress Sophia's correspondence with St. Germains."

showered upon him. Every Court in Europe was open to him; there were many capital cities where he might have found a fitting scene for the spending of his wealth and the display of his peculiar talents, but Hanover, little Hanover, drew him back again—wherefore who shall say? He had no ties there of long standing, no attractions equal to those of Versailles and Dresden, no friends, unless it were the Princess whom he had known in boyhood, and who was now in a position which should have debarred intimacy. Whether it was chance or a set plan, whether it was destiny or the desire of the moth for the flame, whatever it was, Königsmarck returned to Hanover, and from that moment Sophie Dorothea's good angel deserted her.

# CHAPTER IX

## *PLAYING WITH FIRE*

(1689)

> Yet this joy, waited on by fear and doubt,
> Plucked casually as by a flower of accident,
> On the rough lip and edge of danger's breach,
> How sweeter is it than the rose to smell
> We gather from our garden with gloved hands,
> And find nor thorn, nor perfume!
>
> SWINBURNE.

ON his return to Hanover Königsmarck set up a sumptuous establishment. He took a house not far from the ducal Palace, in a street that was then one of the principal in Hanover, but which is now one of the few bits of the old town remaining. His beautiful sister, the Countess Aurora, came to stay with him, and his married sister and her husband, Count Lewenhaupt, paid him frequent visits. In addition to his lands in Sweden, Königsmarck purchased a large estate near Hamburg, and frequently travelled there from Hanover. Some idea of his establishment may be gathered from the fact that his secretary, Hildebrand, mentions on one occasion that Königsmarck was attended by a retinue of twenty-nine servants and fifty-two horses and mules. Where

money was concerned Königsmarck was absolutely reckless ; his love of pleasure and display amounted to a passion, and the result was, notwithstanding his large fortune, he was often in need of ready money, and had to raise it at ruinous interest. At present his fortunes showed no shadow of embarrassment. Hanover was dazzled by the advent of this wealthy foreigner ; the splendour of his retinue, the magnificence of his entertainments, and the beauty of his sisters were on every tongue. His fortune was magnified tenfold, and indeed it seemed inexhaustible. At Court, at the chase, at the opera, in the ballroom, at the carnival, Königsmarck carried all before him ; he was the central and brilliant figure.

Duke Ernest Augustus marked his appreciation of the wealthy foreigner by appointing him a colonel of his Hanoverian Guards. As the troops of the ducal brothers were allied in accordance with the treaty of 1676,[1] he was sometimes with his regiment at Hanover, and sometimes at Celle, though he was

[1] A doubt has been raised as to whether Königsmarck was ever in the army of Brunswick-Lüneburg at all, in consequence of the trouble which was taken subsequently to erase his name from all official documents of Hanover and Celle relating to the troops. But the doubt is settled by the auditor of his regiment, named Radiger, in his evidence in the Secret Senate Chamber of Hanover on July 27, 1694. Radiger stated he had served in a regiment of foot-guards commanded by Königsmarck in Flanders. He had also served in a regiment of dragoons in which Königsmarck held the same rank. This document may be found in the Archives of Saxony, Royal Courts of Justice, Dresden. The correspondence of Colt, sometime English envoy at Hanover, also (as we shall shortly show) contain reference to Königsmarck as holding a commission in the Hanoverian troops. This correspondence is in the State Paper Office, London.

more particularly in the service of Hanover. The post gave him free access to the palace, and was considered one of the most honourable about the Court, elevating its holder to what was known as the Third Degree. Though highly ornamental, it was no sinecure; the pay was not large, and in Königsmarck's case it may have been honorary to avoid jealousy at the promotion of a foreigner. And there was plenty to do. The air of Hanover was full of the noise of military preparations, and the prospect of active service was especially attractive to Königsmarck. It was probably one of his objects in taking the colonelcy of the Guards; for though his pleasure-loving soul delighted in the glitter of Courts, the camp had its charms for him too. He was a daring and a skilful soldier, an expert in the profession of arms, and many kings would have been glad of his services.

Königsmarck struck up a friendship with the young Princes of Brunswick-Lüneburg, notably with Prince Charles, the favourite son of the Duchess Sophia; and later he was very friendly with Prince Ernest, the youngest of them all, who was many years his junior. Königsmarck was about the same age as the eldest Prince, George Louis, and some six years older than the Princess Sophie Dorothea, who was at this time in her twenty-fourth year. His intimacy with Prince Charles, who was a great friend of Sophie Dorothea, threw him frequently in her society. The memory of their early friendship helped matters considerably. He and the Princess had many things

in common ; they both possessed a love of things beautiful, and their tastes were artistic and refined. This refinement showed itself in Königsmarck's dress, equipages, and entertainments. His love of display never degenerated into vulgarity, he could boast of all the superficial accomplishments, his manners and address were graceful, and on things in general he was remarkably well informed. In other ways Sophie Dorothea and Königsmarck were curiously alike. Both possessed highly strung and mercurial temperaments. Both were extravagant (Sophie Dorothea's expenditure formed the subject of many a lecture from her husband). Both loved amusement, fine clothes, lavish entertainment, balls, plays, dances, and continual excitement. Both were impulsive, emotional, imprudent, and thoughtlessly generous. Sophie Dorothea was much beloved by the poor in Hanover and Celle for her kind heart, which was always ready to respond to the cry of suffering and distress. Her indiscriminate almsgiving was another grievance against her. It can easily be imagined how these two persons contrasted with the cold, sluggish natures around them, and the stiff routine of the German Court. If we bear in mind all the forces at work, and the surrounding circumstances, the trend of subsequent events seems to have been almost inevitable.

The Princess was very unhappy, and welcomed Königsmarck as a friend. He was not backward in assuring her of his respect and devotion ; his society was pleasant to her, and his evident homage flattered her vanity. But at this time there certainly

was not, in the conduct of Sophie Dorothea, anything which would warrant the impression that a deeper feeling than friendship existed. In a Court of many intrigues their friendship simply meant that Königsmarck ranged himself with the adherents of the Princess. Her health was not good, and she spent many hours in retirement with her children. Königsmarck and Prince Charles would come to see her, and amuse her by telling her the gossip of the Court. The Princess never saw any one alone, but always in the presence of her lady-in-waiting, and the pages were in waiting in the ante-chamber. There was no impropriety in Königsmarck's visits, and none was at first imagined ; but it was playing with fire, for in course of time the Princess began to speak to her friend of her husband's ill-treatment and neglect. His conduct was open and notorious, so there was no concealment in the matter ; but though perhaps natural, it was very imprudent for her to take Königsmarck into her confidence—it is a commonplace that a handsome young man is about the worst counsellor an ill-used wife can find. Königsmarck, of course, sympathised deeply, and expressed his indignation in no measured terms (what man would not ?), but his championship did more harm than good. He seems to have had at this time some idea of provoking George Louis to fight a duel with him, and so rid Sophie Dorothea of an unsympathetic husband. It is related that on one occasion, when Königsmarck was holding forth before a large company on the superior splendour and attractions of the Court of Dresden,

IN THE GARDENS, HERRENHAUSEN.

[*To face p.* 140.

Prince George Louis sarcastically asked him why he ever left it. Königsmarck retorted : "Because I could not bear to see a prince destroy the life and happiness of his good and beautiful wife by neglecting her for an impudent and worthless mistress!" The company gasped at the audacity of the answer, for though it was true of the Elector of Saxony it had a double application ; but cold and sullen George Louis ignored the affront for the time being, though he never forgot it nor forgave it.

Königsmarck made his appearance at the Court of Hanover at a critical time in the fortunes of the Duchy. Duke Ernest Augustus might well be excused overlooking domestic squabbles in the face of the wider politics which were confronting him. The peace of Europe was trembling in the balance. The great European Coalition was forming against Louis XIV., and the Duke of Hanover was temporising as to whether he would cast in his lot with the French King or with the Allies. On the surface there does not seem to have been any ground for his hesitation ; the ties of religion, of blood, of race, of honour, would naturally bind him to the Coalition. But these things were nothing to Ernest Augustus in comparison with the promptings of self-interest, and he determined to sell his support to the highest bidder.

The dispute between the French King and the Emperor Leopold had reached an acute phase. On the death of the Elector Palatine Louis XIV. had successfully invaded the Palatinate ; but his position was uncertain at the close of 1688, and, urged by

the infamous counsel of Louvois, he determined to devastate that fair province. Villages were burned, churches wrecked, and thousands of families turned out of their homes and suffered to perish from cold and hunger. The beautiful Castle of the Elector Palatine at Heidelberg and the fair town of Mannheim were reduced to ruins. The wanton spoliation and sacrilege, the cruelties and barbarities committed by the French army aroused the indignation of Europe. It seems incredible that Ernest Augustus, considering how closely he was connected with the Palatinate through his marriage,[1] could have hesitated for one moment on which side to throw in his lot. But he hesitated.

The crusade against the French King was almost a Holy War. Louis's only ally in Europe was the Sultan of Turkey, whom he assisted against the House of Austria, and whose Moslem cruelties to Christians were rivalled by this "Most Christian" King in the atrocities which his army committed in the Palatinate. All Europe cried for vengeance. The Emperor Leopold, Catholic though he was, made common cause with the Protestant William of Orange, now King of England. The King of Spain followed suit, and the German princes, both Catholic and Protestant, one by one allied themselves against the King of France. The Grand Monarque had no one left on his side but the Sultan, and the exiled King James II. of England, whose reproaches from St. Germains to their

[1] The Duchess Sophia was the daughter of one Elector Palatine (the "Winter King" of Bohemia) and the sister of another.

Catholic Majesties of Austria and Spain for allying themselves with "that Protestant usurper and enemy of Holy Church, William, Prince of Orange," were without avail. The King of France had proved himself a standing menace to the liberties of Europe, and in the common effort to check his aggression all minor differences gave way. Though the Emperor Leopold at first took the lead, William of Orange was the heart and soul of the European Coalition against Louis. It was largely the result of his skilful negotiations; and many times when it was at the point of breaking up, his statesmanship held it together.

In the face of so powerful a European combination as this it would seem that the action of a petty State like Hanover mattered little. To the Emperor Leopold it mattered a good deal; it was not merely a question of Hanover only, but of Hanover and Celle, for the troops of the ducal brothers were allied, and they had shown their mettle in many a hard-fought campaign. Besides, if Hanover and Celle, so nearly allied to the Palatinate, stood aloof, other little states might do the same, and the unity of the German confederation would be broken. To William of Orange it mattered something, too, for the House of Hanover was nearly allied to the Stuarts, and if it made common cause with the protector of the exiled King James, his influence in England would be sensibly weakened.

Ernest Augustus, wily old fox that he was, estimated the advances of these powerful potentates at their true value. They wished for his support; he was willing to sell it, but at a high figure. His

spouse, the estimable Sophia, also took a hand in the game. Each had a coveted desire. The price Ernest Augustus demanded of the Emperor was the Electoral dignity; Sophia asked of William III. a clearer recognition of her claim to the succession to the Throne of England. The Emperor demurred. There were then eight Electors in the German Empire: two Protestant, Saxony and Brandenburg; three Roman Catholic, Bohemia, Bavaria, and the Palatinate; and three spiritual, the prince-archbishops of Metz, Treves, and Cologne. The Emperor had no constitutional power to add to their number, though he might do so by a stretch of prerogative. Besides, if such an Elector were elected, or rather created, the elder branch of the House of Brunswick—Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel—had prior claim. But Ernest Augustus remained firm. He even began negotiations with Versailles, and Sophia, no whit behind her spouse in intrigue, opened up a correspondence with St. Germains. These tactics were successful; both the Emperor and William III. came to terms. The Emperor promised the dignity of Elector to the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg, but under heavy stipulations. The Dukes of Hanover and Celle bound themselves to support the Emperor against the French King and also against the Turks in Morea, and to pay annually five hundred thousand thalers; to furnish a force of nine thousand men, and to uphold the Hapsburg dynasty in its dynastic disputes. The Emperor held back the formal bestowal of the coveted honour till a more convenient season, but he made a

binding promise. King William III. promised to advance the Duchess Sophia's chances of succession to the English throne when he could, and (what was far more important to Ernest Augustus) to use his influence for the House of Hanover with the Emperor. Thus did Hanover join the confederation against France.

These matters settled, events moved rapidly throughout the winter of 1688 and spring of 1689. Hanover resounded with military preparations, and there was a continual coming and going of ministers and envoys, for the Allies hostile to France were in constant communication with one another. The manifesto of the German confederation was published in February, that of the States General in March, that of Brandenburg in April, and that of Spain in May. England followed suit in the same month, and the great war between the Allied Powers and France was declared, which did not end until the Peace of Ryswick 1697.

Meanwhile another event, more directly bearing on the fortunes of the House of Hanover, took place in England. The Act of Settlement was passed by Parliament, and though this Act did not specify the Duchess Sophia and her heirs by name it expressly excluded any Roman Catholic prince from ascending the throne, and vested the crown in the Protestant succession. William and Mary were childless, Anne was in feeble health (the Duke of Gloucester, her short-lived son, was not yet born), and so it seemed in the course of nature that, if the Protestant succession were upheld, the crown must ultimately devolve

on Sophia or her children as the Protestant descendants of the Stuarts in the line of succession. William also intimated, that, when occasion served, he would do more in the matter.

The Duchess Sophia received the news with the liveliest feelings of joy, and even Ernest Augustus was not insensible to the importance which accrued thereby to the House of Hanover. Prince George Louis remained unmoved; he had not forgotten his unsuccessful mission to England seven years before. Prince Max, always in opposition, avowed himself an ardent Jacobite; the other young princes probably did not trouble about the matter at all. In default of a more sympathetic audience, therefore, the Duchess Sophia turned again to her daughter-in-law, Sophie Dorothea, and expatiated on the brilliant possibilities before her. Poor Sophie Dorothea, who was ill and unhappy, proved even more indifferent than her husband; the prospect of the English crown was much too vague to allure her, and England was little more than a name. The Duchess Sophia had again occasion to remonstrate with her daughter-in-law on her lack of interest in a matter which affected not herself only, but her children.

By way of emphasising the importance of the Act of Settlement, William appointed Sir William Dutton Colt to be Envoy Extraordinary to the Princes of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel and Brunswick-Lüneburg. Colt was charged with the mission of representing England at the Courts of Hanover, Celle, and Brunswick, and of keeping their respective princes

well disposed towards the great Alliance. No easy task, it must be admitted; for all the princes pulled different ways, and the perpetual journeys from Hanover to Celle, and Celle to Brunswick, to say nothing of following the Duke of Celle in his ceaseless movements to Brockhausen, Wienhausen, and Göhre, would have worn out any but a strong man. As it was, we soon find Colt complaining of the "perpetual motion" of the Court of Celle.

The new envoy arrived at Celle in July, 1689. He was received by the Duke and Duchess "with all y^e^ respect and ceremony imaginable," but his first impressions of Celle were indifferent. "The town," he writes, "is very poor, and all y^e^ country round nothing but a deep sand and wood of small fyr trees, full of all sorts of wild beasts, which with the Duke's passion for hunting makes him reside constantly here and at some little houses he has in y^e^ neighbourhood. I fear to pass a very miserable winter here, in extreame cold and very ill houses."[1] But Hanover cheered his spirits. "This place," he writes, "has much more the appearance of a Court, and the town much larger and finer, people laying out their money in building and furnishing their houses, besides abundance of strangers resorting constantly hither."[2] And again: "Nothing can be happier than we are here, all the Court and the ministers showing us all imaginable kindness."[3] His secretary, De la Roque,

[1] Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, July 19, 1689.
[2] *Ibid.*, Hanover, July 26, 1689.
[3] *Ibid.*, Hanover, July 30, 1689.

was even more enthusiastic. "Yesterday," he writes, "Sir William Colt had an audience with the Duke and Duchess and Princess of Hanover [Sophie Dorothea], who received him with every mark of respect due to him as His Majesty's envoy. This Court is as splendid as any in Germany; genius and civility reign here. The Duchess Sophia is *une personne incomparable d'un esprit, d'une bonté, et d'une civilité à charmer.* She speaks all living languages as well as her own. Her beautiful daughter [in law], the Princess, is both accomplished and agreeable."[1]

Soon after this the Duke and Duchess of Celle paid a visit to the Court of Hanover. The two brothers had much to talk about in connexion with the part they were to play in the great war and the intrigues for the Electorate. It is more than probable the Duke of Celle thought at this time that, as he was the elder brother, the Emperor would confer the Electoral dignity on him, and he was such a fool that the cunning Ernest Augustus, with the aid of his unscrupulous tools Bernstorff and Platen, could hoodwink him as much as he pleased. He seemed to be rapidly losing any will of his own, and he became more and more the pawn of his ambitious and scheming brother. Proportionately as the Hanoverian influence waxed, that of the Duchess Eléonore waned, and she had now no voice in affairs of State and comparatively little in matters of a purely domestic nature. The Celle-Wolfenbüttel combination had long ago fallen to pieces, and George William's dislike of

[1] *Letter of De la Roque*, July 26, 1689.

Antony Ulrich was not far short of Ernest Augustus' hatred of the same prince. Between the Courts of Brunswick and Hanover there existed the most intense jealousy. The records of the time reveal a network of intrigue, bribery, treachery, and falsehood between these petty German Courts which has seldom been equalled and never surpassed; the restricted area and the pettiness of the disputes added intensity to the bitterness.

The Duchess Eléonore was not a very welcome guest at Hanover; but the Duchess Sophia had by this time sufficiently masked her animosity to receive her with civility, and, indeed, on account of their grandchildren, little George Augustus and Sophie Dorothea, common sense told the older people that it would be well to dissemble their dislikes, and there was nothing to be gained by perpetual strife. It had no such lesson for the Prince and Princess of Hanover, whose mutual dislike seemed to increase as time went on; and though Duchess Eléonore had abundant love and sympathy for her unhappy daughter, we find her henceforth preaching prudence and patience to her, and urging her, for her children's sake, to make the best of her lot.

There were many festivities at Hanover in honour of the visit of the Duke and Duchess of Celle, and among them the Prince and Princess of Hanover gave a ball to which the Court and nobility were invited. Everything was done on a scale of magnificence. Duke Ernest Augustus and the Duchess Sophia with a numerous suite attended in state, and

sat on a raised dais with their honoured guests. The Duchess Eléonore must have felt that at last she was a duchess indeed, especially if she contrasted these flattering attentions from her haughty kinsfolk with their former snubbings and insults. The evening began with a play—probably a pastoral with dances; then there was a procession to the banqueting-hall, and after supper Sophie Dorothea opened the ball with her father the Duke of Celle. The Duchess Sophia and the Duchess Eléonore did not dance, but sat apart on the dais. Duke Ernest Augustus was too stout, so George Louis led out the Countess Platen, as *vis-à-vis*, she being the greatest lady present after their Serene Highnesses, and it is recorded that the splendour of her jewels and attire far outshone those of the Ducal party. When the first set dance was over, the dancing became more general, and Königsmarck and the Princess stood up for a minuet. Königsmarck wore a suit of pink and silver, while the Princess appeared as Flora, all in white, with no jewels and a wreath of natural flowers. They made so handsome a couple, and withal danced so exquisitely, that they called forth the admiration of the whole company. Indeed, the Countess Platen was so struck by the grace of Königsmarck's dancing and the beauty of his person that when the dance was over, she went up and complimented him in most extravagant terms before the whole assembly, to which Königsmarck, who was nothing if not gallant, replied in a fitting manner. The incident did not fail to attract the notice of the Court, except

that of Ernest Augustus, who seemed blind and deaf where his favourite was concerned.

From this hour Königsmarck's intimacy with the Countess Platen ripened rapidly—an intimacy which may be palliated, but certainly cannot be excused. He became a frequent visitor to Monplaisir, where drinking was deep and play was high. The Countess was always willing to win a little money from her admirers (it was the recognised way of buying her favours), and before long rumour spread the tale that an intrigue existed between the two. It is difficult to say what was the truth of the matter. The Countess Platen must at this time have been about forty years of age, but she was at the height of her opulent charms;[1] she had power, wealth, and the art of making herself pleasant and fascinating to men, and she was not troubled with any scruples. Königsmarck was neither better nor worse than other young nobles of his day, and the probability is that Poellnitz's narrative is in the main true, and in an

[1] Thackeray calls her a "hideous old Court lady"; on what authority I know not. She certainly was not old at that time, and far from hideous. There is a picture of her at Herrenhausen in a rich crimson robe, a fine, voluptuous-looking woman, with black hair and an ample bust, just the sort of woman one would expect her to be. Curiously enough the picture hangs immediately beneath that of Königsmarck.

Thackeray also says of Königsmarck that "a greater scamp does not walk the history of the seventeenth century"; but there is nothing to show that Königsmarck was any greater scamp than his contemporaries; in many things—notably in his bravery, his generosity, and, later, his fidelity to a great love passion—he was better than most of them.

unguarded moment Königsmarck threw over his good intentions and discretion.[1]

Königsmarck was soon smitten with remorse. He could not ignore the fact that his intimacy with the bitterest enemy of the Princess must look very much like treachery in Sophie Dorothea's eyes, and he sought an audience to make excuses to her for his conduct, declaring, not very ingenuously, that it was necessary to win the favour of the Countess if he were to be of any real service to the Princess. The Princess answered coldly that it was a matter of indifference to her how he spent his time, or with whom, and he was wise to pay his court to the mistress, as she could prove a much more powerful and influential friend than she (the Princess) could ever be. Indeed, she went on bitterly, she had no friends; she was betrayed and deserted on every side. Only recently she had craved leave to return with her father and mother to Celle for a time, but, through the interference

[1] Poellnitz asserts that on receiving the Countess Platen's compliments on his dancing at the ball, "Königsmarck comprit tout le sens de ces paroles, et la passion qu'il avoit pour la Princesse ne le rendit pas insensible aux avances d'une aussi belle personne que la Comtesse. Il lui répondit qu'il étoit confus des bontez qu'elle vouloit bien avoir pour lui qui le méritoit si peu, et que puisqu'elle lui permettoit de l'aller trouver le soir. . . . Königsmarck fut chez la Comtesse, qu'il trouva en deshabillé sur un lit de repos. Elle se leva et ayant laissé toute modestie, elle courut l'embrasser, en lui avoüant sa foiblesse et lui faisant voir tant de charmes, que Königsmarck ne se fit point scrupule de répondre à sa tendresse. Le jour étoit prêt à paroître quand il se retira chez lui. Il se jetta sur son lit pour y prendre quelque repos, mais ce fut en vain, et il se reprochoit continuellement d'avoir été sensible aux charmes de l'ennemie déclarée de la Princesse."—*Histoire Secrette de la Duchess d'Hanover*, pp. 80—81.

of Countess Platen, Ernest Augustus had refused permission, and she must needs remain in Hanover surrounded by enemies. She burst into tears, and Königsmarck, smitten by self-reproach, became scarcely less agitated, and vowed with great fervour his respectful homage and lifelong fidelity to her interests. Just at this point Prince Charles came in to pay his respects to Sophie Dorothea, and, finding both his sister-in-law and Königsmarck violently agitated with an emotion they were unable to conceal, his suspicions were aroused. He was a well-wisher of both, and, though he said nothing to the Princess, when the visit was over he took Königsmarck aside, and warned him that the path he was treading was a dangerous one, and it behoved him to walk more warily.

Königsmarck thought so too. His passion for the Princess was growing daily, and threatened to outstep all bounds of discretion. He was not wholly selfish; he loved her with all the love he was capable of feeling, and he began to see that his presence, so far from serving her cause, was likely only to increase her difficulties. His brief-lived intrigue with Countess Platen filled him with disgust and remorse; he was at his wits' end to repel her advances with civility, and there were the elements of danger in it, too, for should Ernest Augustus suspect anything, his career at Hanover would be closed for all time. The only way out of the dilemma was a temporary absence.

The opportunity soon came. In accordance with his treaty with the Emperor Leopold, Ernest Augustus,

who this summer had sent troops to Flanders, and his eldest son, George Louis, to the Rhine, was also sending, in the autumn of 1689, some regiments of his famous Hanoverians to the Morea, to fight with the Imperial forces against the Turks, and Prince Charles, Königsmarck's bosom friend, was to accompany them. What more natural than that Königsmarck should volunteer to go too, especially when the Duchess Sophia made an appeal to his friendship and entreated him not to suffer her best-loved son to face the perils and dangers of this far-away campaign alone? He at once craved permission to serve with the Hanoverian troops in the campaign, and it was granted. Dearly as he loved military adventure, he did not go without sadness and misgiving. It was hard for him to tear himself away from the object of his passion; and as the day of departure drew near his depression was noticeable to the whole Court, and the more inexplicable because he had come to Hanover with the reputation of being a brave and keen soldier. The Countess Platen remonstrated with him on his decision; she had no wish to lose so amiable a gallant. He told her coldly but civilly that his determination was unalterable, and doubtless in his absence she would forget him. With the Princess his leave-taking was more difficult. Unaware of the depth of the feelings he entertained for her, and seeing in him nothing but a sincere and devoted friend, Sophie Dorothea did not hesitate to express her regret that he was leaving her at a time of great stress and difficulty, when she had most need of his counsel and advice. She besought

him to take care of himself and return quickly, for she saw before her a time of sore tribulation when she would need to the utmost all her friends. Königsmarck was so moved by these gracious words that he had great difficulty in restraining his emotion ; as it was, he contented himself with vowing again his devotion and fidelity to her interests, and bade her adieu.

The rigours of an early winter had set in, the snow was lying on the plains around Hanover, when Königsmarck and Prince Charles set forth for the Morea.

# CHAPTER X

## *THE EMBROIDERED GLOVE*

(1690—1691)

They two alone one summer day:
"Ah Love," she said, "is hard to lose."
"And harder still," he said, "to say
The bitter words that you must choose
Between the lover of to-day
And the true friend of yesterday."

LADY ARABELLA ROMILLY.

THE winter was one of the most rigorous known for years, and brought much hardship and suffering to the troops fighting in the Morea and privation and want to the people at home. The Hanoverian subjects groaned under the weight of the large and increasing military burden imposed on them. Taxes were high and discontent was general.[1] But, though soldiers might die and peasants perish of cold and starvation, the Court of Hanover was as gay and extravagant as ever. Countess Platen kept open house at her palace of Monplaisir; her jewels and dresses grew more and more resplendent; her hazard

[1] "Every prince here keeps more troops than he can possibly maintain."—Colt's *Despatch*, Hanover correspondence, December 4, 1689.

table was the focus of all the dissolute young nobles about the Court. The opera was thronged nightly. Thousands of thalers were squandered on feasting and music and dancing, though the Duchy was involved in a bloody and unprofitable war, and its troops were being mowed down like grass by the scimitars of the Moslem hordes.

The New Year opened with much festivity. "This family is here together," writes Colt, "except the Duke of Celle and his Court. We have had a Carnaval and a most magnificent Opera of voyces from Venice, which has drawn much Company hither."[1] And again: "Our opera is most magnificent fine, exceeding even that of Italy."[2] But there was a spectre at the revels which would not be shut out. "I am under dreadful apprehensions," he continues, "that our mirth will not end well, being concerned for the safety of Prince Charles, the fourth son of this Duke, who is marching from Prestina. If he be killed it will bring both the Duke and the Duchess with sorrow to their graves; nor, indeed, have I ever seen one more generally beloved." Poor Sophie Dorothea was probably under "dreadful apprehensions," too, not only for the safety of her favourite brother-in-law, who had always taken her part, but for the man whom she deemed her faithful friend and devoted adherent; if she lost them she would be friendless indeed. But however much her heart might ache, it behoved her to smile and to deck herself

[1] Colt's *Despatch*, Hanover, January 24, 1690.
[2] *Ibid.*, January 28, 1690.

in jewels and brave attire, and take her place in the festivities of the Court by the Duchess Sophia's side, who had sorrow and anxiety too.

A few weeks later, and the evil forebodings were realised. News came that the young Prince, the flower of his race, the darling of his mother's heart, the idol of the Court, was lost in the Morea. There were many contradictory reports: some said he was slain, others that he was only wounded, others that he was taken prisoner and carried to Constantinople. Then followed a month of wearing anxiety; the Duchess Sophia broke down under it utterly, and the Electress of Brandenburg came to comfort her mother. It was supposed, too, that Königsmarck was killed or taken prisoner. At last the suspense ended. "We have received certain news," writes Colt, "that Prince Charles was killed on the spot where his body was found, with several of his officers and servants round him, dead. He had several cutts with a gymeker, and was run thro' the body with a lance. Their last hope of his being a prisoner has very much increased their sorrow here, and we are going into mourning."[1] Königsmarck was not numbered among the dead; the Königsmarck luck was on his side, and by some miracle he escaped, though the Hanoverian troops were literally decimated.

The Duchess Sophia fell dangerously ill on receiving the news of her favourite son's death, and the Court despaired of her life. The sad affliction in which the ducal family were plunged broke down for a time all minor jealousies. The Duke of Celle came personally

[1] Colt's *Despatch*, Hanover, February 25, 1690.

to Hanover to offer his condolences, and the common sorrow seemed to draw all members of the family closer together. A month later the Duchess Sophia rallied sufficiently to go with the Duke to Carlsbad to take the waters. In April Königsmarck came back to Hanover from the Morea, in company with the miserable remnant of the gallant troops who had set forth so bravely the autumn before. Some idea of the slaughter may be gained from the fact that of the Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel's contingent, which started eleven thousand strong, only one hundred and thirty returned.

The summer of 1690 was a sad one at Hanover. The death of Prince Charles and the illness of the Duchess Sophia cast a gloom over a Court which as a rule suffered not death, nor sickness, nor misery to interrupt its dissipations and revelries. Prince George Louis went to Flanders to command his father's troops, and took Prince Ernest, the youngest of the princes, with him.[1] It was not a dangerous expedition, for the troops of the Allies were for the most part mobilising this year. William of Orange was not in Flanders; he had his hands full in Ireland, where, at the head of a motley army (English, Dutch, Danish, and German —doubtless the firstfruits of the great confederation), he was grappling with King James at the battle of the Boyne.

Königsmarck did not go to Flanders; he had had enough of fighting for the present, and he stayed on at Hanover, where the Princess Sophie Dorothea,

[1] Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, May 27, 1690.

abandoned, as usual, by her husband, who much preferred the camp to the Court and his military to his connubial duties, remained almost alone. Regarding Königsmarck as her staunch adherent and trusted friend, she rejoiced greatly on his safe return from the jaws of death, and gave him ready and frequent audience. In the lifetime of Prince Charles these interviews had excited no remark, for he went often to see his sister-in-law and took Königsmarck in attendance. But things were now different : the beloved Prince Charles, the true friend of both, was dead, and there was an enemy once more at work plotting the Princess's destruction. This was the Countess Platen, who, to her long-standing dislike of the Princess, now added an element of personal jealousy. She too had greeted Königsmarck's return with joy; but he had courteously but firmly repelled her advances, determined not to be caught tripping a second time. The Countess fancied she saw the cause of his coldness in his devotion to Sophie Dorothea, and from that moment she determined on her ruin. Opportunity to injure her soon came.

The etiquette of the Court was very strict, and the Princess, as we have remarked, was not always so careful to observe it in public as she might have been. As colonel of the Guards, Königsmarck had free access to the Palace. One day, when he was there on duty, he met the Princess coming in from the gardens with her little daughter. In the ordinary course he should have saluted and passed on. But the little girl was tired, and shirked the long flight of steps leading to the apartments of the Princess. Instead of

PHILIP CHRISTOPHER COUNT KÖNIGSMARCK. [*To face p.* 160.

handing her over to an attendant, Sophie Dorothea impulsively caught her up in her arms, and began to mount the steps with her burden. This alone was supposed to show a deplorable lack of dignity, and, to make matters worse, Königsmarck laughingly remonstrated with Her Highness, and insisted on taking the young Princess from her arms and carrying her up the stairs to the door of her apartments. Just at this moment who should pass by but the Countess Platen, who, seeing them laughing and talking together, cast a withering glance, and, with an ironically deep obeisance to the Princess, hurried off to report to the Duke this monstrous breach of etiquette.

Duke Ernest Augustus was now home from Carlsbad, much the better of his gout, and in fairly good temper with things generally. He was indulgent to Sophie Dorothea and her whims, except when they crossed his wishes. In this case he could not see anything very wrong in her conduct, though the circumstance was grossly exaggerated by the Countess, and he turned a deaf ear to her hints and innuendoes, refusing to believe any evil. Perhaps he had a shrewd idea that jealousy was at the bottom of it. But afterwards he remonstrated with the Princess, and reprimanded Königsmarck for having been guilty of an impertinence, though, Hanoverian etiquette apart, he seems to have only performed an act of natural courtesy. The incident was reported about the Court, and from the tittle-tattle came the first breath of scandal which afterwards tarnished so sadly the mirror of Sophie Dorothea's fair name.

Soon after this the Hanoverian Court, except the Duchess Sophia, went on a visit to Brunswick, according to their annual custom, to divert themselves with an opera and the fair.[1] The Duke and Duchess of Celle were there also, and Duke Antony Ulrich with his family and a numerous Court. Antony Ulrich had now become co-Regent with his elder brother, Duke Rudolph Augustus, who, being a scholar and recluse, practically left all government in his hands. It was Antony Ulrich who dictated the policy of the House of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, and he kept his Court sometimes at Wolfenbüttel and sometimes at Brunswick. Brunswick was then a Hanseatic town of considerable importance, strongly fortified, and much frequented by merchants. The annual fair was a great event which the pleasure-loving Court of Hanover would not forego. Not the recent death of the Prince, nor the reverses of the army in the Morea, nor the ill-concealed enmity between the Duke of Hanover and Duke Antony Ulrich sufficed to keep Ernest Augustus from the Brunswick revels. Just now in the interests of the great alliance the feud between them was slumbering. Sophie Dorothea was there too, and so doubtless was Königsmarck. The death of the Elector Palatine put a sudden end to the ill-timed festivities.

At the end of October Prince George Louis returned from Flanders with his troops, for winter quarters.[2] Absence had not improved his domestic relations;

[1] Colt's *Hanover Correspondence*, August 12, 1690.
[2] Colt's *Hanover Despatches*, October 24, 1690.

he spent all his time with Ermengarda Melusina Schulenburg, and his unhappy wife saw little or nothing of him ; at this time she was his wife in name only.

In January, 1691, the Duke of Wolfenbüttel and the Duke of Hanover, each with a numerous retinue, went to the Hague to meet William and take part in the deliberations of the great Congress of the Allies. The Duke of Celle was to have gone too, but an attack of gout at the last moment prevented him, much to his chagrin, as he was a staunch friend of England. The quiet Dutch town presented a spectacle of extraordinary gaiety. William had just made his triumphal return to his own country for the first time since he had become King of England, and his Dutchmen welcomed him with acclamations and delight, which showed how deeply the Dutch phlegm could be stirred on occasion.[1] The streets were decorated by day and illuminated by night ; every house was crowded, and the retinues of the princely throng were sore put about to find a lodging for their masters, much more for themselves. It was an imposing gathering ; never before had Europe witnessed such a congress. The haughty Elector of Brandenburg was there, the young Catholic Elector of Bavaria, the Regent of Würtemburg, the Landgraves of Hesse-Cassel and Hesse-Darmstadt, and princes of the Sovereign Houses of Saxony, Holstein, Nausau, and, as before mentioned, of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel and Brunswick-Lüneburg ; plenipotentiaries extraordinary

[1] A similar exhibition was made on the occasion of the coronation of Queen Wilhelmina.

were there from the Emperor Leopold, the kings of Spain, Poland, Denmark, Sweden, and the Duke of Savoy. The Hague was transformed. As Macaulay says:

"The grave capital of the most thrifty and industrious of nations was as gay as Venice in the carnival. The walks, cut among those noble limes and elms in which the villa of the Prince of Orange is embosomed, were gay with the plumes, the stars, the flowing wigs, the embroidered coats, and the gold-hilted swords of gallants from London, Berlin, and Vienna. With the nobles were mingled sharpers not less gorgeously attired than they. At night the hazard tables were thronged; and the theatre was filled to the roof. Princely banquets followed one another in rapid succession. The meats were served in gold." [1]

It was magnificent, but it was not war. The great Congress resolved to oppose Louis with two hundred and twenty thousand men, but while they were talking, feasting, and junketing, the Grand Monarque was up and doing. Mons, the most important of the fortresses of the Spanish Netherlands, was besieged and fell. The glamour of the Congress was at once destroyed and the Allies were disquieted. Louis returned in triumph to Versailles, and William went back in chagrin to England for a brief visit. The other princes and potentates broke up in dudgeon and went their several ways, among them the Brunswick dukes, who returned to Hanover and Wolfenbüttel respectively.

[1] Macaulay's *History of England*, vol. iv., p. 7. Macaulay's authority was, *Relation de la Voyage de son Majesté Britannique en Hollande*, Burnet II, 72.

On the return of the Brunswick princes, intrigues and discontents ran high at the Courts of Hanover and Celle. The fall of Mons and the continued uncertainty about the coveted Electorate made the Duke of Hanover turn his back upon William of Orange and lend a willing ear once more to the overtures of the French King. An envoy of Louis was at Hanover, and was received with great favour by Ernest Augustus and by Count and Countess Platen, to whom he made large presents. The Duke himself does not seem to have been above the suspicion of bribery, for, writes Colt, "to show some of us he doth not want money, he bought a jewel of forty thousand crowns from a Jew of Amsterdam, or else it was a present, for by that channel the French money comes." [1]

The English envoy was hard put to it to counteract these influences. The Duchess Sophia was on his side, but she could do little. Prince George Louis was with him too, but he could do less. On the other hand, the Princess Sophie Dorothea favoured the French party. "The eldest prince," writes Colt, "is a very reserved man and has good parts, and not in the least French in his inclinations, which give that party some discontent; they make all y^e^ court imaginable to y^e^ Princess, and I fear not without success, but she has no great fondness for the Prince." [2] The Princess was probably influenced by her mother, who was French at heart, as well as by birth, and, with the Duke of Hanover, they united in dissuading the Duke of Celle from

[1] Colt's *Despatches*, Locknam, June 10, 1691.
[2] *Ibid.*, Hanover.

sending troops to Flanders. Colt had spoken of the Duchess of Celle as likely to support France.

"She be a French woman, and consequently loves y^e^ imaginary glory and greatness of France; yet I am persuaded she wishes us [the English] better than those I have mentioned [Bernstorff, the Platens, etc.], whom she hates, because they have lessened her credit with the Duke, with whom she can now do but little." But now he had no doubt. "The Duchess of Celle be on y^e^ French side very much now. For my part I doubt she is changed in the principalls of her religion too, for she maintains that the Protestants might have stayed in France, and have complyed by going to Mass as a less crime than quitting their King and country. It makes me often wonder at the Duke's patience, and how he suffers it. . . . The Duchess here [Celle] hath engaged the Princess to assist her in persuading the Duke."[1] And again: "The Princess of Hanover and her son have been here till this day to take their leave of the Duke, and to remind him how much the Duchess is to be his care as well as theirs, so that the Duke of Hanover acts on sure grounds both ways. This Duke shows great fondness of his daughter and grandson."[2]

But George William's sympathies were stoutly English. He had great admiration for William of Orange, who had just sent him a present of horses, and nothing would induce him to intrigue with France. But he was won over to adopting a neutral attitude for

[1] Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, May 8, 1691.
[2] *Ibid.*, Celle, May 22, 1691.

a time, with the result that no troops from the princes of Brunswick-Lüneburg were sent to Flanders for the campaign of 1691.

These cross-currents and intrigues were very trying to the English envoy, and he writes home pages and pages telling of his efforts to stem the tide. Among other things, he gave a great party and entertained at supper all the distinguished visitors who were at Hanover, including the Electress of Brandenburg, the Duchess of Celle, the Duchess of Hanover, the Duke of Saxe-Gotha, the Princess of East Friesland and her party, and all the young princes.[1] The French emissary immediately gave another yet more splendid, and as he reinforced it with costly presents all round, his influence was paramount.

The Princess Sophie Dorothea attended both parties; her sympathy with France is practically the only authenticated instance of her interference in politics, if we except her suspected intrigues with Wolfenbüttel.

As far as we can judge, Königsmarck sided with England. He had gone to the Hague in the suite of the Duke of Hanover, and among the gallants who swaggered and gambled and played in the taverns and streets of the old Dutch town none cut a braver figure than he. His intimacy with Sophie Dorothea seemed to grow no nearer ; he could be of no service to her, and, though most friendly, she kept him at an arm's length. He was her most obedient servant, most faithful friend, but nothing more, and he desired to be much more. Baffled and depressed at this time,

[1] Colt's *Despatch*, Hanover.

he wanted to leave the Hanoverian service and join the army of William; he had known England and loved it, and while at the Hague had been presented to the King, who had been pleased to receive him very graciously, and would have taken him into his service, for he had need of dare-devil soldiers of the Königsmarck type. But the Duke of Hanover would not let him go. He liked his dashing colonel of the Guards, and was unwilling that his Court should lose so brilliant an ornament; he, however, gave him leave to go to Brabant to see the English army, and thither Königsmarck went in May, but a month later he was back in Hanover.

Königsmarck celebrated his return by giving an entertainment, a masquerade, which was honoured by the attendance of many of the members of the ducal family. The Prince and Princess of Hanover, Princes Christian and Ernest, Count and Countess Platen, and the leading nobility of Hanover were among the guests. Everyone came in fancy dresses and masks. It was a warm summer night, and the company were dispersed about the dimly illuminated gardens. The opportunities of flirtation and intrigue were great, and the Countess Platen determined to improve the occasion by a dramatic little plot of her own. She had jealously watched the growing intimacy between Königsmarck and the Princess, and cast about for an opportunity to ruin them—or at least the Princess. To this end she stole one of Sophie Dorothea's gloves which she had inadvertently put down at supper (it was one of a pair George Louis had brought her from Flanders,

richly embroidered and ornamented with her initials and coronet), and, concealing it in her dress, she presently lured Königsmarck into accompanying her to a far-off pavilion in the gardens. Here, without ado, she plunged into a violent flirtation with him, and so engrossed his attention that he did not hear footsteps until two men stood in the path before them in the moonlight. They were Count Platen and George Louis. The Prince had been led this way, seemingly inadvertently, by the husband in agreement with his wife. Uttering a startled exclamation, as though afraid of being discovered, Countess Platen took Königsmarck by the arm and fled from the pavilion; at the same time, unperceived by him, she dropped the Princess's glove. George Louis, who was not near enough to distinguish the masked lady, asked Count Platen who it was. The wily Minister professed ignorance, but on entering the pavilion picked up the glove and handed it to George Louis, who recognised it as one of a pair he had given his wife. His jealous suspicions were aroused, and later they were confirmed by hearing the Princess ask for her missing glove. She could give no account of when and where she had lost it, and so far as the Prince was concerned these tactics were completely successful. Notoriously unfaithful himself, he was only too ready to suspect his wife of unfaithfulness.

But up till now Sophie Dorothea, though she had shown signs of wavering, had not told Königsmarck that she viewed him in any light but as a friend. He, on his part, had now gone far beyond the bounds of

the most privileged friendship, and, forgetful of her rank and lonely position, had addressed the Princess in terms of extravagant devotion. Had she been wise, Sophie Dorothea would at once have closed the acquaintance. But she was not wise; and in a Court of universal laxity and intrigue she saw no harm in a little flirtation. It was the almost universal custom of the time. Nearly every woman of youth and beauty, whatever her rank, and whether married or not, had gallants sighing for her smiles and wearing her favours. The Electress of Brandenburg (her sister-in-law) had many lovers, and openly avowed her preferences; so had the Duchess of Saxe-Eisenach, the Princess of Etting, and other princesses. Why should not she have one too? She was piqued by her husband's neglect, flattered by Königsmarck's homage, and perhaps, too, her heart was touched. She had known him from childhood. He had loved her always, so he swore. He was the ideal lover, young, handsome, and ardent, and she was hungry for love—even love like this. She had no idea, when she listened, of going beyond the bounds of discretion; yet even for her to listen was indiscreet, nay dangerous, surrounded as she was by spies and enemies. She had no one in whom to confide; no one to advise her except Eléonore Knesebeck, who, though devoted to her mistress, was a sentimental, silly young woman, eager to vary the monotony of her duties by acting as go-between in an intrigue. It was impossible, now that suspicion was aroused, for Königsmarck to see the Princess so frequently as he had done, and in an evil moment she consented to allow him to write to

her from time to time, though not promising to reply. The letters, to disarm suspicion, were to be addressed to Eléonore Knesebeck.

Thus did Sophie Dorothea first open the sluice-gates a little way to a little stream, which later swelled into a mighty river, carrying her and Königsmarck before it, and engulfing them finally in the rush and roar of its waters. But the story of all this is best told in the letters themselves.

## CHAPTER XI

### *HISTORY AND AUTHENTICITY OF THE LETTERS*[1]

I, for my part, value letters as the most vital part of biography.
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

THE original manuscripts of the remarkable correspondence between Sophie Dorothea and Königsmarck, a correspondence unparalleled in the annals of passion, except, perhaps, by the love-letters of Mirabeau and the Marquise de Monnier, is still preserved in the University Library of Lund, in Sweden.

The history of the letters previous to their finding a resting-place at Lund can be traced back through many generations.

It will be noted that the correspondence begins in July, 1691, and ends in December, 1693, thus covering a period of two and a half years. The first few letters of Königsmarck show that he was not quite sure of his footing with the Princess, and the *liaison* between them was yet in the bud. Within a few months we find his passion not only avowed without disguise, but reciprocated by the Princess with equal ardour.

[1] This chapter is an interpolation dealing with the history and authenticity of the correspondence and does not affect the narrative.

Except for a break in the first part of 1693, the letters follow the period of their love story until the last six months, January to June, 1694. During the greater part of this latter time Königsmarck was at Dresden, and a few days after he returned to Hanover he was assassinated (July 1, 1694). It is known that many letters passed between the Princess and Königsmarck during this last six months, and a bundle of letters were seized by the Hanoverian Government in Königsmarck's lodgings a few days after his murder. These last letters are therefore missing from this correspondence, which otherwise forms a fairly complete record of the Princess's love story. The pertinent question is, how came the many hereafter published to be preserved?

Königsmarck, as we have seen, had two sisters, Amalie Wilhelmina, who married Count Carl Gustaf Lewenhaupt, a Swedish nobleman, who held for a time a commission as colonel in the army of the Duke of Celle, and served with the troops of Brunswick-Lüneburg in Flanders, and the beautiful Aurora, who was never married. Aurora was in the confidence of the lovers and on terms of friendship with the Princess. Countess Lewenhaupt must also have been cognisant of the *affaire*, though in a lesser degree. During Königsmarck's connexion with the Court of Hanover Aurora resided sometimes at Hamburg, often with him at Hanover, and was occasionally at Celle, Brunswick, and other places, but always circling around the Courts of the Brunswick princes. The Countess Lewenhaupt was for the most part with her husband, whose

military duties kept him much at Celle; but she frequently met her brother or sister. Both sisters often saw their brother, and between him and them there existed a strong affection.

Aurora sympathised with the love affair between her brother and the Princess, and at quite an early stage we find her aware of it. Letters were often sent through her hands; and so active a part did she play that when suspicion was aroused in the autumn of 1692, Ernest Augustus sent her a message to the effect that she would do well to give Hanover a wide berth in future. For the lovers to keep each other's letters in their several possession was dangerous, and they were unwilling to burn them. For their safe keeping, therefore, it would seem that both Königsmarck and the Princess deposited (at stated periods, probably at the end of every six months) their letters with Aurora: the Princess giving up those she had received from him, and Königsmarck those he had received from her.

This continued until the end of 1693. In the six months that followed (January to June, 1694) Königsmarck did not see his sisters; he was in Saxony, and they were at Hamburg. The letters he had received from the Princess during that period were still in his possession when he was murdered, and, as we have seen, were seized by the Government. The letters the Princess had received from him were in *her* possession, and she probably burned them at the first hint that everything was discovered. But the rest —those published here—were in Aurora's keeping

at Hamburg, outside the jurisdiction of the Elector of Hanover.

Of the efforts which both sisters, especially Aurora, made to discover their missing brother, and to bring his assassins to justice, we shall have occasion to speak later. They mourned their brother long and sincerely, and treasured everything connected with his memory. Doubtless these letters were among their most cherished possessions. Aurora, it is well known, led for some years a wandering and adventurous life, and for better security she must have transferred this momentous and bulky correspondence to her sister's, Countess Lewenhaupt's, keeping. Count Lewenhaupt, soon after the murder of his brother-in-law, quitted the service of the Duke of Celle, and returned with his wife to Sweden, where he henceforth lived on his estates.

From this time the history of the letters is categorical, and may be traced step by step. Amalie, Countess Lewenhaupt, kept the letters, and on her death-bed gave them to her son, Count Charles Emil Lewenhaupt, telling him to cherish them with great care, as they had cost "her brother his life, and a king's mother her freedom." Count Charles Emil Lewenhaupt duly fulfilled his mother's injunction, and the letters remained among his most carefully guarded possessions all his life. He died without male heirs, and this branch of the house of Lewenhaupt became extinct. He bequeathed the letters to his daughter and heiress, Amalie Beata, who was married to a great Swedish noble, Baron Hans Ramel, of Öfvedskloster. In a chest in the library of

Öfvedskloster, the country seat of the Ramel family, these letters remained for many years. Amalie Beata, Baroness Ramel (*née* Lewenhaupt) died in 1810, and at her death bequeathed the letters to her daughter, Elisabeth Sophia Amalie Beata, who was married to Count Gustaf Adolph Sparre. The offspring of this marriage was also a daughter, Christina Amalie Hedvig Adelaide, who married Count Jacob de la Gardie, of Löberöd, the founder of the famous de la Gardie Archives. Count de la Gardie, who was a wealthy nobleman, a bibliophile, and a great antiquarian, was naturally interested in these letters, which came into his possession in 1817 through his marriage with the lady aforesaid. Quite apart from their historical value, the way in which they had been handed down through generations of his wife's family (she was the great-great-granddaughter of Countess Lewenhaupt, *née* Königsmarck) gave them a personal interest in his eyes. The letters were removed from Öfvedskloster to Löberöd, where they formed part of his celebrated collection of books and manuscripts.

It was after the letters came into Count de la Gardie's possession that their existence became known to the outside world; hitherto they had been treated as family papers of a private nature. The famous collection of archives at Löberöd attracted scholars from far and wide. In 1831 Probster Wiselgein, in his work, *De la Gardieska Archivet* (the de la Gardie Archives), vol. ix., mentions that this correspondence forms part of the archives, and quotes a single letter from the Princess in the original French as a specimen. Two

years after, this same letter was republished in the *Magazin für Literatur des Auslandes* (Journal of Foreign Literature), 1833. But the correspondence did not receive much attention until 1847, when Professor Palmblad, of the University of Upsala, in the *Blätter für Literarische Unterhaltung*, published a few short extracts in the original French, together with a brief introduction. This he afterwards republished as an appendix in his historical romance, *Aurora Königsmarck*. To Palmblad's labours we shall have occasion to refer again.

When Count de la Gardie died he bequeathed his almost priceless collection to different libraries in Sweden. To the University of Lund he left many valuable books and manuscripts, including the correspondence of Sophie Dorothea and Königsmarck. In accordance with the Count's bequest the letters were deposited in the University Library of Lund in 1848, and they remain there until this day. It is not easy to see how the history of these documents could be better authenticated.[1]

Shortly after the letters were deposited at Lund, J. H. Gadd, who from 1848 to 1850 held the post

[1] Table showing the descent and ownership of the letters from the time Aurora Königsmarck gave them to her sister until the present day:

Amalie, Countess Lewenhaupt (*née* Königsmarck),
|
Count Charles Emil Lewenhaupt (her son),
|
Baroness Ramel (his daughter),
|
Countess Sparre (her daughter),
|
Countess de la Gardie (her daughter),
|
Count de la Gardie (her husband),
|
The University Library of Lund, 1848.

of assistant-librarian to the University, made a copy of the correspondence. This copy he afterwards sold, or gave, to the late Mrs. Evelyn Everett Green, a lady well known for her historical researches, and who was for many years employed in the State Paper Office. Mrs. Everett Green, who was in correspondence with Count Schulenburg-Klosterrode, author of *Die Herzogin von Ahlden*, apparently thought of publishing these letters, for she began the fragment of a preface. But for some reason she desisted from her task, and in 1870 sold Gadd's manuscript copy to the British Museum. This copy, in French, bears nothing to show where the original letters are preserved. I discovered by accident that they were at Lund, when at Leipsig in 1898. On communicating with the University authorities at Lund I found that none of them had any knowledge of the manuscript copy in the British Museum, and they seemed doubtful of its genuineness. I therefore made a journey to Lund for the purpose of consulting the original manuscripts, and found that the copy in the British Museum was on the whole a faithful one. At Lund, too, I was able to trace the history of the letters and to examine in detail the documents.

It would be hard to find a more fitting resting-place for these letters than the University Library of Lund. Nestling under the shadow of the great cathedral, surrounded by the elms and limes of the beautiful Lundagård, the old library seems to breathe the very spirit of the past. In the silent rooms, with their mellow tomes and paintings of dead and gone worthies,

THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, LUND, SWEDEN. [*To face p.* 178.

(*Where the letters are preserved.*)

there reigns a profound peace, in strong contrast to the riotous passion, the fret and the fume, the rapture and despair, which run through these records of an ill-fated love, and make them human documents indeed. As we read, the hopes and the fears, the joys and the struggles of the unlucky lovers rise before us with extraordinary vividness. The writers live and move and breathe again ; the air is peopled with their presence ; and then—we look up from the page and come back to the old library and the great stillness, and realise something of the littleness of human passions beside the passionless flight of time. Two centuries have gone ; the lovers are dead ; the hands that penned these burning words, the eyes that wept, the hearts that throbbed as they were written, have crumbled into dust. But their witness is here—here in these old and faded pages, which breathe even now, faint as the scent of dead rose leaves, the perfume of their passion.

A word now as to the outward semblance of these letters. They are fairly well preserved, the paper being for the most part of a tough though flimsy nature, which in places shows the handwriting through. The ink is dim and faded to a dull brown ; here and there it is so faint as to be almost illegible. Königsmarck's letters differ in size, some being written on the ordinary notepaper of the day, others on scraps torn apparently from a pocket-book ; some, too, are weather-stained, as though they had travelled far. Envelopes in all cases are missing ; nor were they generally used in those days. The letter was folded and sealed. Some

of Königsmarck's letters bear his seal in red or black wax, and a device—a little heart within a large one—with the motto, *Cosi fosse il vostro dentre il mio.* One, in addition, has the ends of a green silk ribbon under the seal, showing how the letter was tied. One, bearing date Halle, August $\frac{3}{13}$, is addressed to "Madamoiselle la Frole de Knesbeck, à Zelle"; one is addressed "à la Gouvernante," one merely "Pour la Personne Connue"; but there are none directly addressed to the Princess. All Königsmarck's letters are written in the same great sprawling hand.

The letters of the Princess are written on paper of good quality, and almost without exception of uniform size. Like Königsmarck's, they bear evidence of having been folded; but the envelopes are missing, and, unlike his, none of them bear seal or superscription. They are written in two distinct handwritings, which bears out the theory that some were written by the Princess in her own hand, and others (for motives of secrecy) by Knesebeck at the Princess's dictation. In some also an attempt is evidently made to disguise the handwriting—so that the caligraphy does not present the uniform appearance noticed in Königsmarck's letters; but, disguised or undisguised, transcribed by Knesebeck or the Princess, they are easier to read than Königsmarck's, on account of their better penmanship, though occasionally they too show traces of haste.

The letters number over two hundred, and form two bulky packets. With the exception of a few fragments

of German poetry which Königsmarck quotes here and there, they are all in French, that being the language then generally used at Courts, and especially by the Princess, on account of her French mother and education. To Königsmarck—a Swedish noble by birth—French was more familiar than German, though his knowledge of either was far from perfect. The letters are arranged in little or no chronological order, and run in batches ; thus we have first a batch of the Princess's letters, then a batch of Königsmarck's, then another of the Princess's, and finally another batch from Königsmarck. Quite two-thirds are written by Königsmarck and the rest by the Princess—if we except two or three brief notes, or rather postscripts, from Knesebeck.

If the lovers' letters differ in outward appearance, they differ even more in style and diction. Königsmarck's are very badly written, ill-spelt, and often ungrammatical, which may be explained by the fact that he was writing in a foreign language which, though he could speak it fluently, he had not thoroughly mastered. Often, by accident or design, he falls back on phonetic spelling of French words, which at first renders them almost impossible to decipher, and it is only by reading them aloud that one can grasp their meaning. For instance :

*Saite* = Cette
*Can* = Quand
*Sansaire* = Sincere
*Cas* = Qua
*Astor* = À cette heure

and many other renderings equally erratic. Königsmarck's style, like his handwriting, was rough-and-ready. Many of his letters were written in haste when on active military service, and one does not expect literary grace from a soldier writing often under difficulties, and always in a foreign language. His sentences are abrupt, and frequently broken by exclamations, interjections, and interrogations, especially when he writes under stress of excitement. But he has a knack of occasionally enforcing his meaning by a happy phrase or homely illustration, and this, combined with frequent allusions to men and things, makes his letters of more general interest than those of the Princess. Egotism is the dominant note. His wit has at times a knack of degenerating into coarseness—a coarseness so great that even in that coarse age we cannot help wondering how a man in his position should be found writing such things to a princess, to a woman he loved and reverenced. But we have to remember that it was an age of license and freedom of speech; and even the letters of the estimable Electress Sophia to the Duchess d'Orleans, whose virtues were unquestioned, and whose intellectual accomplishments were far in advance of her time, were disfigured by a coarseness bordering at times on indecency. If a great princess could so write to another princess we cease to wonder at Königsmarck, who was a man and a soldier and surrounded by the licentiousness of camp and Court. Most of his worst lapses are anecdotes relating to his companions in arms; they are not many, and I have taken the liberty of

suppressing them, since they are not germane to the narrative.

The letters of the Princess are very different in style and diction from those of her lover. They are absolutely free from coarseness (in this respect offering a favourable contrast, for instance, to the letters of the Electress Sophia and the Duchess d'Orleans), and give evidence of a refined and gentle nature. They are in admirable French, and if here and there a word is misspelt it is evidently the result of haste. Many of the Princess's letters are written with grace and felicity of diction, to which no translation can do justice. The burden of her theme is ever, "I love you," or, "You are not true to me." The whole of the correspondence, indeed, both her letters and Königsmarck's, are alternated with passionate avowals of love or equally passionate reproaches. Theirs was not a love that ran smoothly, but was broken from first to last by fears from without and jealousies from within. Yet it is impossible not to see that, after their manner, each loved the other fondly.

The Princess was a ready writer, the chief blemish of her letters being a tendency to repetition and an extraordinary diffuseness; she would take pages to say what might have been compressed into a few sentences. But this is a fault common to love-letters—which are not written for the edification of the world, but only for the one to whom they are addressed; and we must not judge them by the ordinary canons of literary criticism. In the Princess's case, too, there was often a necessity for her to wrap her meaning in a cloud

of words, lest it should be too readily discovered, if her epistles fell into other hands. Though her letters are in at least two distinct handwritings, they are all identical in style and expression—another proof that those the Princess did not write with her own hand she dictated word for word to Knesebeck.

An elaborate cypher, or rather series of cyphers, is used throughout the correspondence for the names of persons and places. To this cypher the lovers alone held the key. All the personages mentioned in the letters are disguised under different names; as, for instance:

| | |
|---|---|
| *L'Aventurière* ... ... | Countess Aurora Königsmarck. |
| *Le Réformeur (Le Réformateur)* ... | Prince George Louis. |
| *Don Diégo* ... ... | The Elector Ernest Augustus. |
| *La Romaine* ... ... | The Electress Sophia. |
| *Le Grondeur* ... ... | The Duke of Celle. |
| *La Pedagogue* ... ... | The Duchess of Celle. |
| *La Perspective* ... ... | The Countess Platen. |
| *La Boule* ... ... ... | The Electress of Brandenburg. |
| *Le bon Homme* ... ... | Marshal Podevils. |
| *L'Innocent* ... ... | Prince Ernest Augustus. |
| *Colin* ... ... ... ... | Prince Maximilian. |
| *La Marionette* ... ... | Princess of Hesse. |
| *Le Satyre* ... | Hanoverian Ministers. |
| *Le Barbouilleur* ... | |
| *La Douairière* ... ... | The Princess of East Friesland. |
| *La Gazelle* ... ... | Countess von Lewenhaupt. |
| *La Grosse Dondon* ... | Madame von Ilten. |
| *La Confidente*, *La Sentinelle*, *La Gouvernante* ... | Fräulein von Knesebeck. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Léonisse*<br>*La Cœur Gauche*<br>*La Petite Louche* | ... | Princess Sophie Dorothea. |
| *Le Chevalier*<br>*Tercis* | ... ... | Königsmarck. |

Some of these nicknames are not very complimentary to the persons for whom they are intended, but they are comparatively easy to decipher. The task is much more difficult when we come to the other cypher, in figures. Speaking roughly, numbers of one hundred and upwards signify names of men ; two hundred and upwards, names of women ; three hundred and upwards, names of places. As for example :

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 100 | ... ... ... | Elector Ernest Augustus. |
| 101 | ... ... ... | Duke of Celle. |
| 102 | ... ... ... | Prince George Louis. |
| 103 | ... ... ... | Marshal Podevils. |
| 112 | ... ... ... | Prince Maximilian. |
| 120 | ... ... ... | Königsmarck. |
| 128 | ... ... ... | Bülow. |
| 129 | ... ... ... | Bernstorff. |
| 200 | ... ... ... | The Electress Sophia. |
| 201 | ... ... ... | Princess Sophie Dorothea. |
| 202 | ... ... ... | Countess Platen. |
| 207 | ... ... ... | Fräulein von Schulenburg. |
| 214 | ... ... ... | Fräulein von Knesebeck. |
| 226 | ... ... ... | Countess Aurora Königsmarck. |
| 227 | ... ... ... | The Duchess of Celle. |
| 300 | ... ... ... | Hanover. |

301 ... ... ... Luisburg.
302 ... ... ... Herrenhausen.
305 ... ... ... Celle.
306 ... ... ... Brockhausen.

In the letters which follow, translated from the French of the original manuscripts into English, I have endeavoured to render this intricate cypher legible, and have substituted everywhere the real names of persons and places. The task of translation and unravelling the cypher has not been easy,[1] and if an error should be discovered it must not be ascribed to any inaccuracy in the original letters, but to my rendering, since in spite of every care it is impossible to guard against the possibility of a chance error. I have further endeavoured to reduce the letters to something like chronological order—also a difficult task, for only four have the year inscribed, many are without date, some have the day of the week, and a few the time of day ; and in such cases it is only from the text that one can guess the dates with accuracy. To do this it has been necessary to sort the letters from the batches into which they are divided in the original manuscripts, and to allow them to answer one another in due order. In the correspondence during the campaign of 1692, for instance, it will be seen that Königsmarck's letters and those of the Princess answer one another freely. I have also, to better elucidate the text and preserve the flow of the narrative, interspersed the letters with a record of current events gleaned from Colt's

[1] In this task I was aided by the fragment of a key to the cypher found with the letters at Lund.

despatches and other documents, and have annotated them where necessary. The letters hereafter given represent two-thirds of the whole; the remainder has been omitted simply because it is made up mainly of repetition and unimportant details, and to quote it in full would be to weary and not to edify. For the first time these letters are published in any language—if we except the few fragments (which would make not more than six pages of this book) given by Palmblad in a Swedish book long since out of print—and for the first time they are now translated into English from the original manuscripts, edited, and compared and tested with contemporary records.

Palmblad, as we have mentioned, prefaced his extracts with a brief introduction, which it is well to examine in detail, since this is practically the only medium through which the existence of the correspondence has hitherto been known.

W. F. Palmblad was a man of considerable literary repute, a professor of the University of Upsala, and a zealous antiquarian. But he lacked one quality indispensable to the historian—accuracy; he was too ready to jump to conclusions without first verifying his facts from contemporary records. He examined the manuscript letters when they were at Löberöd in the possession of the Count de la Gardie, and learned their history from their owner, which was amply verified from the family records. He then made an examination of the correspondence which can only be regarded as cursory, took out a few extracts here and there, and prefaced them with an introduction, in which he

declares his firm belief in the genuineness of the letters, but by his inaccuracies unconsciously does damage to the very point he labours to prove—inaccuracies which one or two subsequent writers have seized upon as proofs of the spuriousness of a correspondence they have never seen. Later, it is true, another authority, Count Schulenburg-Klosterrode, who also believed in the genuineness of the letters, in *Die Herzogin von Ahlden*, endeavoured to set Palmblad right on certain points of chronology and cypher, but a false impression had been given of the correspondence which it was not easy to eradicate.

Even in his description of the appearance of the letters Palmblad is inaccurate. He speaks of postmarks, but there are none visible ; he describes the Princess's letters as written "in an elegant hand, on very fine, gilt-edged paper." It is a mere detail ; but the paper is not gilt-edged, and is the ordinary letter-paper of the day ; while as for the "elegant hand," which would convey the idea of a sloping Italian penmanship, the Princess's letters are in two distinct handwritings, and in each case written in rather a bold hand for a woman, certainly the reverse of "elegant."

The professor has also made mistakes about the cypher, especially the cypher in numbers; and in the extracts he publishes he has muddled men, women, and places in a hopeless manner, and this makes nonsense. His extracts, which are taken mainly from Königsmarck's letters, are chiefly made up of the racy anecdotes, which for reasons already given I do not quote. The professor has collected every one of these

anecdotes (not many in all), and gives them as a fair specimen of the whole. Doubtless this course avoided chronological and other difficulties ; but to quote them to the exclusion of other and more important matter is to give a false impression of the correspondence and the man.

Again, Palmblad makes the assertion, "Of Königsmarck's *liaison* with the Countess Platen the letters do not say a word." Here again it is evident he has made a mistake in the cypher, and confused the Countess with some one else, for, as will be seen, the letters teem with allusions to Countess Platen (either as *La Perspective* or as 202), and there are frequent references to an understanding or flirtation between her and Königsmarck. The Princess is again and again inflamed with jealousy on this account, and reproaches her lover bitterly, while he is equally fluent with his excuses.

But the gravest inaccuracy is yet to come. In his survey of the letters Palmblad made no attempt to classify them or arrange them in order of date—a task which he declares to be "impossible." As he had little knowledge of Hanoverian history at the time the letters were written, or of contemporary events, the task was doubtless impossible to him ; he would therefore have done wisely to have left it alone altogether, and not have tried to cover his ignorance by the wildest guesswork. Yet this is what he has done. He says : "In one letter mention is made of Busche, who was the trusty friend and confidant of Prince George, and who died in the beginning of the year 1688, and four other letters have the year 1693

given, so we know with certainty that the correspondence was spread over a period of six years." And again: "In the letter in which Busche is mentioned, therefore, written before or during the year 1687, Königsmarck is on the most trusted footing with the Princess; and in the year 1685 Königsmarck was evidently in Hanover; and soon after that it appears that the very close intimacy between them began. The Princess, her daughter, who afterwards married the King of Prussia, was born March 16, 1686; and it is a matter of surmise and strong doubt whether the family of Prussian kings spring from the Guelph or Königsmarck blood." The whole of this theory is built upon the surmise that the Busche mentioned (not in one letter only, but at least a dozen) was the same Busche who married Countess Platen's sister, and who died early in 1688.

Now the Busche family was a numerous one, and held a high position in Hanover. If Palmblad had read the letters carefully, and had possessed any knowledge of Hanoverian affairs, he would have seen from the context that the Busche mentioned was *not* the man who died in 1688, but Philip Albert Busche, a privy councillor and prominent minister, who later was president of the divorce court which pronounced judgment on the Princess. Thus the statement that the letters began in or before 1687 and extended over a period of six years is absolutely incorrect, and the endeavour to cast a slur upon the legitimacy of the Princess's daughter, afterwards Queen of Prussia, is consequently abortive. There exists no shred of evidence to show that Königs-

marck was in Hanover in 1685 (he was in England), nor, indeed, until 1688, two years after the birth of the Princess's daughter. And it will be seen from the letters themselves that the *affaire* between Königsmarck and the Princess did not assume an intimate footing until the end of 1691 or the beginning of 1692 ; until then the borderland had not been crossed. Whatever were his later relations with the Princess, he was neither at Hanover nor Celle when her children were born, and there is no doubt as to their legitimacy. Palmblad's slur on the birth of the Queen of Prussia is as gross a fabrication as the Jacobite lie of calling George II. "the little Königsmarck." The whole theory, which can only have been invented to gratify Palmblad's hatred of the House of Prussia, therefore, falls to the ground ; and it is no wonder that, starting from so false a chronological point, he finds it "impossible" to arrange the letters in any order of date.

We have dwelt fully on Palmblad's introduction and extracts not because of its merit, which is little, nor its size, which is infinitesimal, but because it has hitherto been practically the only publication which deals with these letters, and students and historians have had no other criterion whereby they might test their genuineness. There were the original letters at Lund, it is true ; but the few authorities, such as Schaumann and Köcher,[1] who have passed adverse judgment on this correspondence, never took the trouble to go there and

[1] Against the adverse opinion of these authorities may fairly be set Thackeray and Carlyle, who accept the letters as genuine. But, like Schaumann and Köcher, they never saw the originals.

examine the manuscripts personally, but founded their theories on Palmblad's version. Yet it is obviously impossible to pronounce a fair judgment on a correspondence of this kind without seeing the original manuscripts, and with no knowledge of it save a few fragmentary extracts and an introduction full of chronological and other errors. It is only by examining the whole correspondence in the original manuscripts, and comparing it with comtemporary documents, that a just idea of its value can be gained.

Judged by this test, these letters will reveal themselves as absolutely genuine, and further examination will show that they contain internal evidence of their authenticity. Let us briefly glance at this also.

For our present purpose the correspondence may be divided into :

1. Königsmarck's letters to the Princess prior to the campaign in Flanders of 1692 (July, 1691, to June, 1692).
2. The Princess's and Königsmarck's letters to one another during the campaign in Flanders and until the granting of the Hanoverian Electorate (June to December, 1692).
3. The Princess's and Königsmarck's letters to one another, when she was at Brockhausen and Celle with her parents, and he at Hanover (June to July, 1693).
4. Königsmarck's letters to the Princess when he was campaigning against the Danes and after his return to Hanover (August to December, 1693).

This is merely a rough classification, but it will serve.

The times were stirring in the Courts of Hanover and Celle, and indeed in all Europe, because of the war of the great Alliance against Louis XIV. Königsmarck served with the allied armies in the campaign in Flanders of 1692, as colonel of a Hanoverian regiment, and the following year he served as colonel of a regiment of the troops of Hanover and Celle in the abortive campaign of the Brunswick-Lüneburg princes against the Danes on the banks of the Elbe. Many of his letters to the Princess were written when on active military service; and though one does not look to love-letters for news, it is only to be expected there should be some allusion to current events. We find in Königsmarck's letters from Flanders mention of King William of England, Prince George Louis, the Elector of Bavaria, Duke Frederick Augustus of Saxony (afterwards the Elector Augustus the Strong), and other exalted personages who were with the allied armies at that time; also of certain events in the campaign, such as the battle of Steinkirk, the attempted siege of Charleroy, and so forth. In the same way, the following year, during the campaign against the Danes, allusion is made to the burning of Ratzeburg and the negotiations between the Danes and the Brunswick-Lüneburg princes. The same may be said of the Hanoverian intrigues for obtaining the Electorate. If these mentions of well-known persons and events were in any way incorrect, it would afford, of course, strong presump-

tion against the genuineness of the letters; but they are quite accurate. Moreover, the allusions are made evidently without design, and arise naturally and casually in the course of the correspondence as things known, not only to the writer, but for the most part to the person to whom he is writing.

It may be admitted that, so far, this does not prove much, for the events and personages in connexion with the great campaign in Flanders, for instance, were so well known that only a clumsy forger would make a mistake. But the case is far otherwise when we come to analyse the many references which both the Princess and Königsmarck freely make concerning the persons who figure in the life of Hanover and Celle, and incidents which were occurring from day to day in those little Courts. We have, for instance, frequent mention of, or allusion to, the arrival of this prince, or the departure of that princess, the coming and going of foreign envoys, and the movements of the Hanoverian Court from Hanover to Luisburg, or Luisburg to Hanover or Herrenhausen; of the perpetual motion of the Court of Celle from Celle to Brockhausen, to Epsdorff, to Wienhausen, to Göhre, and so on; of visits between the ducal brothers, of journeys to Hamburg, Brunswick, or Berlin, of carnivals and Court festivities, all of which could not possibly have been written except by some person or persons intimately acquainted, or connected with the daily life of these petty Courts. Now, a forger of spurious love-letters would certainly avoid frequent reference to minute events, and content himself

THE COUNTESS AURORA KÖNIGSMARCK. [*To face p.* 194.

with writing mere vague avowals of passion[1] which might be written by any one to any one ; in short, he would keep to generalities and avoid particularities, which are so many pitfalls into which he might tumble, and by his errors betray his fraud.

Here, then, we have a test. If the frequent references to persons and incidents in these letters can be proved to be incorrect or inaccurate ; if, for instance, it can be shown that when the Electress of Brandenburg is said to have been visiting Hanover she was at Berlin, that when Prince Max is stated to have been at Celle he was in Italy, that when the Court of Celle was at Brockhausen it was at Epsdorff, that when the Princess writes from Celle she was at Hanover, that when certain envoys are represented as having been at Hanover they were not there, or certain festivities are described which did not take place,—if it can be shown that these things (of no importance in themselves, but very important in their bearing on the letters) are falsely and inaccurately stated, then it follows, as a matter of logic, that the letters are themselves false and inaccurate and could not have been written by the persons from whom they profess to come. But if, on the other hand, it can be proved by independent testimony and "undesigned coincidences" (as Paley would say) that the mention of persons are accurate and the allusions to even minute events correct in every detail, it affords the strongest possible proof of the genuineness and authenticity of the letters.

[1] The letter of Lassaye, quoted in vol. i, pp. 106-7, affords an excellent illustration of this.

But how to apply such a test?

At first sight this is difficult, for the daily life of these little German Courts is not a matter of history, and the ordinary historical records shed little light upon it. Fortunately I found in the State Paper Office, London, the despatches and entry book of Sir William Dutton Colt, sometime English envoy at Hanover, which furnish exactly what we want—independent and authoritative documents with which we may test the accuracy of many of the minute events mentioned in these letters. Colt was envoy to the princes of Brunswick from 1689 to 1693; his entry book covers the period from July, 1689, to December, 1692, so that the period of eighteen months only is coincident with the letters, which do not begin until July, 1691. Early in January, 1693, he went to Dresden, and afterwards was but little at Hanover or Celle, so further evidence is lacking. But there is enough for our purpose. In Colt's entry book we have a record, week by week, almost day by day, of the Courts of Hanover and Celle; it is wholly made up of copies of his despatches to the English Government. At his death the book, with other official documents, was sent to London, and has since been preserved in the Archives. It was, of course, never seen by any one in Hanover outside the English Legation, and it has only been open to the public in England since the Home Office and Foreign Office papers of that period were removed to the State Paper Office. It is scarcely necessary, therefore, to say that between this official record and the correspondence now at Lund there could have been no possible collusion.

By no possibility could the writers of these letters have seen Colt's despatches. Where coincidences arise they are absolutely undesigned, and the points of agreement are those which necessarily occur when truthful and independent records touch on the same incidents. Colt's despatches are a record of facts and events; the love-letters of Sophie Dorothea and Königsmarck are love-letters first of all, and where mention is made of persons and events, it is made incidentally and secondarily. Nevertheless, many coincidences occur and afford strong corroboration of the genuineness of the letters. I have noted them in more detail in the correspondence itself. Here it will suffice to quote a few in illustration of my meaning :

| *The Letters.* | *Colt's Despatches.* |
| --- | --- |
| On and after June 20, 1692, the Princess dates her letters from Brockhausen, showing that her parents, with whom she was staying, had moved thither from Celle. | "The Duke of Celle is now at Brockhausen."—Colt's *Despatch*, June 17, 1692. |
| In her letter of June 23, 1692, the Princess mentions that Prince Max is staying with the Court of Celle at Brockhausen. | In his despatches of this time Colt also mentions that Prince Max was staying with the Duke of Celle at Brockhausen, he being in disgrace with his father because of the Moltke affair. |

"You have been dancing at Colt's *fête*."—*Königsmarck to the Princess*, Venlo, July $\frac{5}{15}$.

From Colt's *Despatch*, Hanover, June 20, 1692, we learn that on Sunday, the 18th, he gave a great "diversion," which the Duke and Duchess and all the Court attended.

"I am grieved you are displeased because I went to Monsieur Colt's *fête*, but I could not avoid going; they pressed me so much."—*The Princess to Königsmarck*, Brockhausen, (?) July 2, 1692.

"What was the day of the *fête*?"—*Königsmarck to the Princess*, Dist, July $\frac{5}{15}$.

"Sunday was the *fête* I spoke to you about."—*The Princess to Königsmarck*, Celle, July $\frac{13}{23}$, 1692.

"They say the Electress of Brandenburg is at Luisburg on a visit to her parents."—*The Princess to Königsmarck*, Celle, July $\frac{18}{28}$, 1692.

"Moltke was executed on Monday, and the Court of Hanover has gone to Luisburg to be out of the way."—Colt's *Despatch*, Hanover, July 18, 1692.

"The floods still detain us here unfortunately."—*The Princess to Königsmarck*, July 2, 1692.

"The extraordinary floods have kept the Duke from Celle."—Colt's *Despatch*, July 4, 1692.

"We start to-morrow for Celle."—*The Princess to Königsmarck*, Brockhausen, July 7, 1692.

Her next letter, July 9, is dated from Celle.

"The Duke since his return hither. . . . ."—Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, July 11, 1692.

"My Lord Portland showed me much favour, and assured me the King held me in his esteem."—*Königsmarck to the Princess*, Wavern, August $\frac{14}{24}$, 1692.

Colt mentions in his despatches that Lord Portland was with the King in Flanders during the campaign of 1692.

"The Duke of Celle has lost a great many men [in the Battle of Steinkirk]."—*Königsmarck to the Princess*, from the camp near Wavern, about August 5, 1692.

"The Duke here is really very much troubled for the loss of his troops in the late action." — Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, August 5, 1692.

The Princess, to Königsmarck, in a letter from Celle, August $\frac{6}{16}$, 1692, notifies the movements of the Court, and says in two days she will accompany her mother to Wiesbaden (which she does).

"This Court [Celle] will the next week remove from hence, the Duke to follow his hunting, and the Duchess goes to Wiesbaden, near Mayence, for her health." — Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, August 5, 1692.

"Max is going the day after to-morrow to meet the Electress of Brandenburg, and will accompany her

"The Electress of Brandenburg is passing by here on her way to Luisburg, where the Hanoverian Court

to Luisburg." — *The Princess to Königsmarck*, Celle, August $\frac{6}{16}$, 1692.

"They tell me the Electress of Brandenburg has postponed her visit. She was to have arrived two days after I left. All the horses were ordered for her equipage. The Duke had given up to her his apartments at Luisburg, and they also brought a band. All that for nothing!" — *The Princess to Königsmarck*, Wiesbaden, August $\frac{21}{31}$, 1692.

"My news from your part of the world [Hanover] tells me the Duke is going to hunt at Epsdorff, where your father already is."—*Königsmarck to the Princess*, Denise, September $\frac{10}{20}$, 1692.

"I was hindered the day before yesterday from finishing my letter by the alarm that the French were going to attack Charleroy, but it came to nothing."—*Königsmarck to the Princess*, Afflegen, October $\frac{6}{16}$, 1692.

is at a country house."—Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, August 12, 1692.

"Just now we have the news that the Electress of Brandenburg doth not come so soon as she intended, all things having been provided for her."—Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, August $\frac{12}{22}$, 1692.

In his despatch, September 15, 1692, Colt mentions that the Duke of Celle is at Epsdorff.

"We have just heard the welcome news that the French have failed in their design on Charleroy." — Colt's *Despatch*, Göhre, October $\frac{7}{17}$, 1692.

| | |
|---|---|
| "The journey to Berlin will not take place."—*Königsmarck to the Princess*, Hanover, November, 1692. | "The journey to Berlin is postponed."—Colt's *Despatch*, Hanover, November 18, 1692. |

These few coincidences, examples of many more, afford proofs of the genuineness of the correspondence, which a perusal of it as a whole cannot fail to strengthen. The very faults of the letters go to prove their authorship. But the strongest evidence of all, in our opinion, is to be found in the frequent and unconscious self-revelations of the personality of the writers. These revelations do not always show the lovers in the most favourable light, but at least they are very human. Love has been defined as *l'égoïsme à deux*. If that be true, it would be hard to find a stronger illustration of it than these letters afford.

# CHAPTER XII

## *THE DAWN OF PASSION*

(1691)

What can we fear, we two?
O God, Thou seest us Thy creatures bound
Together by that law which holds the stars
In palpitating cosmic passion bright;
By which the very sun enthralls the earth,
And all the waves of the world faint to the moon.
Even by such attraction we two rush
Together through the everlasting years.

STEPHEN PHILLIPS, *Paolo and Francesca.*

THE first mention of Königsmarck in Colt's despatches tallies with the first letter in the following correspondence, and sets at rest the question as to whether Königsmarck actually held a commission in the Hanoverian service. Some doubt had arisen concerning the safety of Hamburg; and Colt, writing to Lord Nottingham, says, "There is not the least appearance of any danger for the city of Hamburg. The troops of Hanover march towards the Elbe and two regiments of Foot under Königsmarck and Cordons."[1]

It was while Königsmarck was absent on this expedition that his correspondence with the Princess began.

[1] Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, $\frac{\text{June } 28}{\text{July } 7}$, 1691.

The first letter, written while he was on the march, runs as follows :

"AHT, *July* 1.

"I am *in extremis*, and the only thing that can save me is a few lines from your incomparable hand. If I had the good fortune to behold them I should forthwith be healed. I hope you will not be so cruel as to refuse me this favour, for, since it is you who cause my sufferings, it is only just that you should send me comfort. Were I not writing to one for whom my respect is as great as my love, I would find better terms to express my devotion ; but, fearing to offend, I end here, only beseeching you not to forget me wholly, and to believe me always your slave."

The Princess did not respond at once ; she had not promised to answer Königsmarck's letters, though she consented to receive them. She must have known how dangerous it was for her to embark on a correspondence of this kind; she hesitated, and, hesitating, yielded. After a little time she seems to have sent him a few lines, and that the trend of her epistle was not rebuke may be gathered from his reply :

"[ON THE MARCH, undated].[1]

"I received your answer to-day. How anxious I have been all this time ! I vow the fear that you had utterly forgotten me has been the cause of my illness lasting so long ; the suspense gave me intense suffering. Now that I know the contrary I pick up courage, and shall hope soon to see you again. Verily, it is I

[1] Wherever square brackets occur the matter is interpolated.

who should complain, I who am constrained to take so many precautions and suffer cruel suspense. But I can now bear my hapless lot with fortitude, since the most amiable, captivating, and charming being in the universe is the cause of all. For the rest, I will never change unless you compel me. Ah! how happy I should be in your service!—my bliss would be perfect and I should wish for nothing else in the world! These words of mine mean a great deal; I do not know whether you weigh them well. If you would graciously deign to answer me two words, I should quite recover, and then be better able to assure you by word of mouth that I am verily your most obedient servant."

Alas! the Princess did not weigh his words well; perhaps she did not grasp their full import, certainly she did not realise to what they must inevitably lead. On Königsmarck's return he seems to have presumed overmuch on the Princess's condescension, for he was ever a bold lover. She treated him with reserve, and took alarm at his temerity and her imprudence.

Königsmarck was only at Hanover a week, and then went off again to Hamburg on a diplomatic mission to the King of Sweden.[1] The Kings of Sweden and Denmark at first had been inclined to join the confederation of the Allies, and sent envoys to the Conference at the Hague; but after the fall of Mons they showed signs of wavering, and were

[1] "Since my last, July 31, the Count Königsmarck is sent from Hanover with the ratification of the late Treaty to Hamburg, either to carry it to Sweden himself or send it thence."—Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, August 4, 1691.

now intriguing with the petty German Courts, with the object of forming what William of Orange called a "Third Party in Europe." Duke Ernest Augustus, already disaffected and leaning towards France, true to his policy of selling to the highest bidder, coquetted with this Third Party, and, without consultation with the Dukes of Celle and Wolfenbüttel, he entered on an offensive and defensive treaty with Sweden.

The fact that Königsmarck was despatched on this mission shows that he still stood high in the favour of the Duke of Hanover, who doubtless sent him thinking, as he was a Swede by birth, he would be *persona grata* with the King of Sweden. In this Ernest Augustus was mistaken, for the Swedish monarch loved not absentee nobles, and disapproved of Königsmarck's holding a commission in the Hanoverian service. Later he marked his displeasure in a decided way. Frequent efforts were even now made to induce the Count to quit an alien service and enter that of his native King, and it would have been the right and proper thing for him to do; but there was a magnet at Hanover which drew him thither with a force he could not resist. His passion for Sophie Dorothea had completely mastered him; without her, life was worthless to him, and he was ready to cast away every consideration to remain by her side. While absent on this mission he wrote this letter to the Princess, evidently in answer to a note from her:

"Hamburg, *July* 24.

"If you had been free from blame you would not have deigned to write at all; yet in spite of the way

in which you have treated me, I needs must worship you still. The sorrow and contrition you express have determined me to leave here the day after to-morrow. If you still wish to comfort a poor dejected heart torn by jealousy and love, let me come back. You well know it is probably the only favour I shall ever ask of you, for I hope the good God will take me out of this world rather than let me suffer so. Do not, I implore you, refuse my prayer, and believe that whatever course you may force me to take I shall never cease to love you.

*Alas! I love my destruction,*
*And nurse a fire within my breast*
*Which will speedily consume me.*
*I am well aware of my perdition,*
*Because I have aspired to love*
*Where I should only have worshipped.*"[1]

From this it would seem there was a likelihood of Königsmarck's not returning to Hanover at this time, and he had probably threatened to enter the service of the King of Sweden. But, whether by desire of the Princess or not, he came back, and she gave him audience as before. Timid and fearful though she was, she could not resist the temptation of playing with fire,—the very danger lent a zest. But still the Princess held back from committing herself definitely, and her uncertain attitude towards her lover threw him into a tumult of alternative hope and despondency. The state of his mind is expressed in the following letter:

[1] Some lines of German doggerel which can only be rendered thus.

"[HANOVER, undated].

"I am in the depths of despair at finding so little opportunity of speaking to you. I dare not even admire the eyes that give me life. For pity's sake let me see you alone, that I may say four words—only four small words. Oh! how dearly it costs me to love you! But the joy of speaking to you now and then makes amends for all the pain. I shall go away to-morrow. God knows if I shall ever see you again, my life, my goddess! The thought that we may never meet more is death to me. I feel ready to plunge a dagger into my heart; but since I must live, I pray that it may be always for you."

His threat to leave Hanover was not carried out for the "four words" were granted, and the intimacy went on ripening until the end of August, when the Duke of Hanover, attended by his ministers and a numerous suite, went to Brunswick to meet his cousin Antony Ulrich in conference, for Ernest Augustus still remained hostile to the Allies.[1] Königsmarck went in his train, but Sophie Dorothea remained at Hanover. On the journey Königsmarck wrote to the Princess, and again on receiving an answer from her. That the intrigue must have grown during those few weeks is evident from the fact that the cypher agreed upon between them now makes its appearance in the correspondence, and from the bolder and more affectionate tone of his letters. Hitherto he had signed himself *Vôtre esclave*, or *Vôtre très-obéissant valet;*

[1] Colt's *Despatch*, Brunswick, August 28, 1691.

now he ends, *Adieux, émable Brune. Je vous embrasse les jenous.* Truly a stride in intimacy.

"[Brunswick], *August* $\frac{20.}{30.}$

"No mortal was ever so happy as I when, on arriving here, I found your letter. I am now in your good graces, and am losing all the weak suspicions that tore my heart in twain. Do not doubt my love; God be my witness, I have never loved as I love you. Were you to see me now you would exclaim, 'Is it possible that any man can be so downcast?' My dejection is wholly the result of absence from you. My noble travelling companion[1] could tell you of the state in which he sees me daily, though you may be sure that I hide from him the cause. You may not believe it, but on the word of a man of honour, I am often so overcome that I am near swooning away; and yesterday evening, when I was out walking, and thinking of the many days that I must pass before seeing you, I became so agitated that it brought on a palpitation of the heart, and I was obliged to return home. I know not what would have happened had not my servant brought me a cordial, and even then it was a long time before I recovered. Were it not for your dear letter, I should have utterly broken down. Your medicine is excellent for my malady; send me some oftener. . . . I am ready to cast at your feet my life, my honour, my future, my fortune. I have forsworn all other women

[1] Probably Prince Ernest Augustus, youngest son of the Duke of Hanover.

for you ; if you doubt this, name any one you would like me to abandon, and I will never speak to her again. *Adieux, émable Brune. La poste pars, il faux finir. Je vous embrasse les jenous.*"[1]

The Court returned from Brunswick, Königsmarck in its train, and remained at Hanover through September. Again the Princess became alarmed at the growth of the intimacy ; she saw herself on the brink of a precipice, and as she did not want to fall into it, she urged her lover to go away for a time. Königsmarck promised obedience, but fell ill of malarial fever, which he had contracted in the Morea—an illness he did not fail to make the most of. The Princess's sympathies were touched ; nothing more was said about his leaving, and during his sickness she even seems to have been so imprudent as to pay him stolen visits at his house by night. It was not difficult. The house where Königsmarck is reputed to have lived in Hanover is in a street hard by the palace. There was a way through the gardens in those days, and under cover of the darkness, disguised, with the help of Knesebeck, the Princess could have avoided notice. Besides, at that time Königsmarck probably had his sister Aurora staying with him, and she could be made the excuse in case of discovery. But, all the same, the risk was considerable. The Princess felt that she had gone too far, for when Königsmarck recovered she again tried to check his ardour. All this is touched upon in the four

[1] Here and elsewhere the writers are responsible for their French.

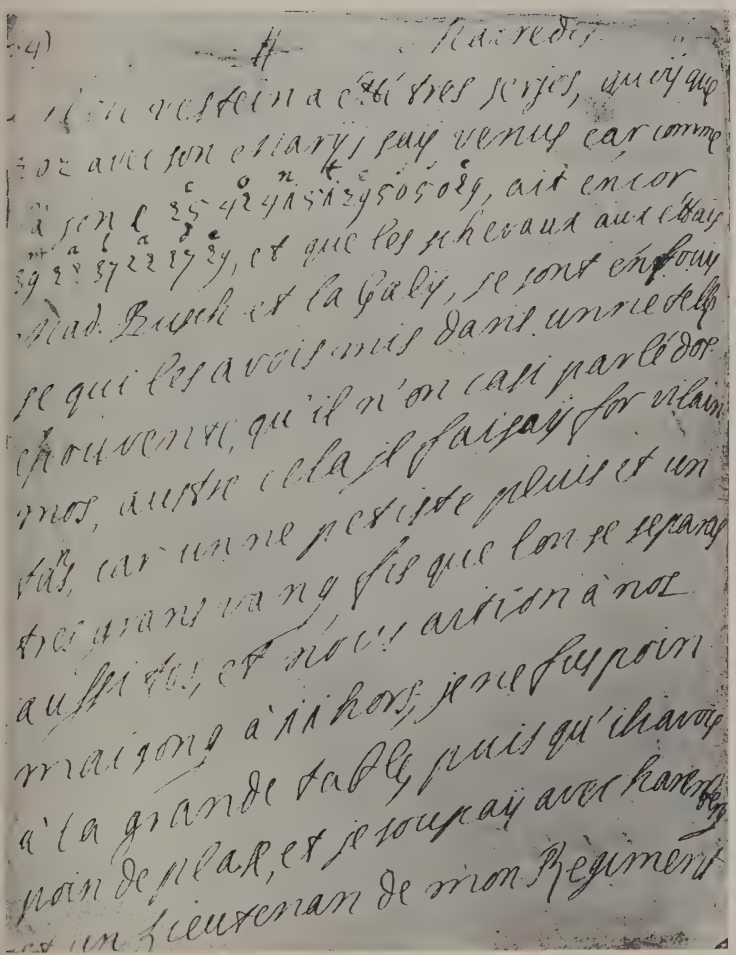
following letters which Königsmarck wrote to the Princess during this period.

"[HANOVER, undated.]

"Alas! why do you hold out the hope of letting me see you alone without meaning it? I know you too well: you are not brave enough to venture on such a course, and I do not even ask you, for fear you should expose yourself to danger. You wish me to leave. It is settled my journey begins to-morrow week. You wish it—that is enough. I see, alas! too well that everything is against me. To live in Hanover without your society is impossible. I would rather go and plough the earth than stay here under such conditions. Oh! if I could only crawl away and die quietly somewhere! But, after all, nothing matters. I can no longer hope for happiness. My Intimate[1] takes tolerable care to keep us apart, and, for him to succeed, you have only to give credence to all he may tell you. I hope, however, that the love you seem to bear me will hinder you from being deceived. If you wish to do me a favour, let me know with whom you talk at Court; it is not from jealousy that I ask, only from interest. If you answer this the same messenger will be waiting to receive your letter, at the same spot. Comfort me, I implore you, for I suffer much for love of you. If by chance you should play [cards] in the Grand Hall, my man, for fear of being seen, will be waiting in the gallery leading to your apartments."[2]

[1] Prince Ernest Augustus.

[2] This letter is ornamented with a seal. The device represents an



FACSIMILE OF ONE OF KÖNIGSMARCK'S LETTERS TO THE PRINCESS.

*Photographed from the original manuscript in the University Library of Lund.*

[*To face p.* 210.

"You have laid down a law which it will be hard for me to keep—to be all day long without seeing you, but, since you wish it, I must obey. I hope, however, that you will let me wait on you in your apartments this evening. If you cannot manage this, will you meet me to-night at my house? Let me know your decision. Should you decide on the latter course, you will find no one at my place; the door will be open, so come in boldly and without fear. I am dying of impatience to see you. Answer me soon that I may know what to do. Farewell, dear heart."

"Nothing could have comforted me more in my sickness than your sweet letter, I find it full of tenderness. I am sorry you have found the time so tedious. I suffer from the same misfortune, and have no chance of being happier to-day unless you wish to play. If my fever be not too great, I will pass under your windows in the hope of seeing you. You will not refuse me this grace; you know the sight of you will be a soothing balm in my sickness; a visit from you would be an infallible remedy. You speak to me of *passion*. Alas! it is for me to speak of it—mine is so great that it will consume me utterly at last. Oh! my dear, my dear! do you think that you love with as much passion as I love? . . . It is cruelly hard for me not to be with you always—I am compelled to keep away from you, God knows with what

altar, on which burns a heart; a hand pours out some oil, and on the top is to be seen the sun; at the foot, a motto, which may be translated, "Nothing impure lights me." Beneath the seal may be seen the ends of a green silk ribbon.

grief. The Count de Reuss[1] prevents me from ending my letter as I would."

"Of a truth I was ill pleased with the cold airs you treated me to yesterday, and I spent the night most miserably. I was in great sorrow and fain to weep, and all these emotions made me very feverish for nearly three hours. I vow, my divine beauty, that I never remember having been in such a pitiful plight before. 'Alas!' I cried, 'God burns me with sickness, and gives me no comfort, for He freezes the heart of my divinity, and life is intolerable.' I threw myself on my knees, tears in my eyes, and prayed that if it were true that you loved me no longer, I might die. . . . I cannot tell you, therefore, the joy your letter gave me. I kissed it time and again. I hate myself for having thought you guilty of inconstancy; I cast myself at your feet, praying pardon, and I promise never to be so ready to believe things again.

"I am awaiting Her Highness's commands.[2] When you give me leave I shall fly to you; and if I am not wanted, I shall show that I cannot attach myself to any one else, for I shall take the first mail coach to join my regiment. I hope that in time Fortune will get tired of persecuting me so cruelly, and Fate will be in my favour; but whatever misfortunes may befall, I shall bear them

[1] The Count de Reuss was the uncle by marriage of Sophie Dorothea; he had married Angelica d'Olbreuse, sister of the Duchess of Celle.

[2] *I.e.* the commands of the Princess.

with joy so long as the heart I adore remains constant to me. My happiness and fortune are there, my ambition is bounded there. For pity's sake believe me faithful. To convince you the better how I love you, how I worship you, I sign this with my blood. Whilst you love me, you will be worshipped by

"KÖNIGSMARCK.

"(*Written in blood.*)"

Duke Ernest Augustus was now setting out on an autumn visit to the Duke of Celle at his hunting-seats of Epsdorff and Göhre.[1] The Duke of Celle was much keener on the chase than on affairs of State. Every autumn he went to Epsdorff, a village some eight miles from Hamburg, where he had a schloss, to hunt the stag and the wild boar; and then to Göhre, a remote spot some fifty miles from Celle. He took his Duchess and his Court with him; and this year he combined pleasure with business, for he invited the Duke of Hanover and Duke Antony Ulrich to hunt with him by day and discuss affairs of State in the evening. The result of this visit was that the Duke of Hanover was persuaded to take up a neutral, and no longer hostile, attitude towards William of Orange.

Princess Sophie Dorothea was setting out for Epsdorff with her father-in-law, but the day before starting she was taken ill. Königsmarck at first hoped that the indisposition was feigned, in order to avoid her departure from Hanover and from him.

[1] Colt's *Despatch*, October, 1691, Epsdorff.

"Alas!" he laments, "we shall never be happy. No sooner do I recover from sickness than my adored one sinks under it. I suffered in mine, but yours makes me suffer a great deal more; it hurt me so much to see you in pain that I wished myself a hundred miles away. You will say that was not very kind, but I could not bear to see you in such agony. If perchance your illness were not so grave as it seems, it would be a little comfort, for I might think you were pretending, for love of me."

He quickly found that she was not pretending, and as soon as she recovered the Princess went to Epsdorff and then to Göhre. Königsmarck suggested that he should go to Hamburg, which was near the latter place, so that he might see something of the Princess; but she wisely begged him not to go, and he went to spend the period of absence with his regiment, which was quartered near Hanover. A little later he writes:

"[From the Camp, undated.]

"I have been hoping to receive one line from your charming hand. Can it be, after all you told me, that I am quite forgotten? I cannot believe it. I will pardon you this time, but have pity. Without an assurance of your love I cannot live. . . . I will not go to Hamburg. I take Heaven for my witness that since you have been away from me I have not spent an hour without thinking of you, without picturing your charms. I delight in doing so; it nourishes my poor heart crushed with sadness. Why cannot I take wings like my desire? I should this

moment be in your lovely arms, tasting the sweet delights of your lips. . . . I have already brushed away the thing asked of me, and I hope to succeed, but, remember, it is for the love of you that I am giving everything up.[1] I am shut up here in my room without seeing any one; I scarcely ever leave it. I am away with my thoughts, far away from the earth. If by chance an officer wants to speak to me concerning the regiment, I am furious at losing so much time without thinking of you. I hope after all these assurances you will not ask me again whether I love you. If you still doubt it will kill me. But I must tell you that I have a consolation here, close to me; not a pretty girl but a bear, which I feed. If you should fail me I will bare my chest and let him tear my heart out. I am teaching him that trick with sheep and calves, and he doesn't manage it badly. If ever I have need of him—God help me! I shall not suffer long."

During this separation Königsmarck addressed other letters to the Princess in a similar strain, full of extravagant expressions of passion. It is not necessary to quote them, because they are, in the main, a repetition of what has gone before. The Princess apparently answered some of the letters, but she was chary of writing to him from Epsdorff, for, in spite of all the caution observed, the intrigue had begun to excite suspicion. It was mentioned to the

[1] Probably he refers to an appointment offered him by the King of Sweden.

Duchess of Celle, and she took the opportunity of her daughter's visit to remonstrate with her, and to implore her to avoid further communication with Königsmarck. The warnings of her mother, who dearly loved her, aroused the Princess to a sense of peril. She made another effort to draw back. When she returned to Hanover, she wrote to Königsmarck urging him to marry, as the only way of freeing them both from the dangers that threatened them. Her letter called forth the following remonstrance :

"[HANOVER, undated.]

"Alas ! the miserable day has dawned that I have feared so much. I must marry, since you wish it ; it shall be done. I will obey your wishes ; it is enough that you will have it so. My death-sentence is subscribed by the hand I adore. I confess I should never have expected to see so dreadful a sentence passed on me by you. But of what am I complaining ? I must remember that I have loved you, and I ought to have known the sex better than to believe all you vowed to me. Alas ! I was weak and believed it ; I must now be firm enough to support the consequences. Your cruelty goes too far, for, unless you wished to wound me, you could never have treated me thus. Why has not God given you a heart less cruel and me a heart less tender ?—we should agree better then. I have never been but yours ; I wanted to be so all my life,[1] but you do not regard my constancy. . . . You wish me to marry to save myself from destruction, but you do not reflect that marriage would

[1] A reference to their early friendship.

surely bring about my ruin. There are two ways of escape from this dilemma. The first, and the more agreeable to me, is for you not to suffer me to marry; and if my ruin follows, as I foresee, not to forsake me. The second will be easier for you. It is to let me marry, and swear to me on your oath that you will always cherish the affection you have seemed to show me. I will wait until your answer comes, which I hope to receive from your hand (not disguised, if you please);[1] and I mean to regulate my conduct accordingly, so that I may have nothing to reproach myself with. But you love me no longer—your head has triumphed over your heart; and it is not even enough that you love me no longer, you wish me to love you no more. What a hard thing! How will it be possible for me to obey? No, Madame, in spite of all, I shall always adore you; my love will be extinguished only with my life. Pray believe this from your most humble and affectionate servant."

Sophie Dorothea was by nature weak in judgment, strong in passion. She could not sit down and pen the sentence of what she supposed must be lifelong wretchedness to her lover, and urge him to marry while his heart was still wholly devoted to her. She had neither the courage nor the firmness to insist on separation; in fact, until she came face to face with

[1] This is a reference to the fact that most of the Princess's letters to him at this time were dictated by her only, and actually written by Knesebeck (*La Confidente*) to disarm suspicion.

the alternative of giving him up for ever, she had not realised how much she loved him nor how great an influence he had gained over her. So the marriage scheme was dropped. She wrote him to the effect that she could not help loving him, but he must restrain himself and be more prudent in the future. She was rewarded by an ecstatic reply:

"I am the happiest man in the world. If it be true that you love me as you say, and your love will last always, where is the bliss to equal mine? I fear my joy will be too apparent, that every one will see in my eyes it can only emanate from you. I will restrain myself as much as I can; but 'when the heart is so proud the eyes play the traitor.' Your eyes, more than I dared hope, declared to me last evening the feelings of your heart. I am so overjoyed that I am hardly able to express myself. I hope to tell you this evening all I am not writing."

It was now the autumn. Military operations in Flanders had reopened in the summer, but the campaign of 1691 had been more or less of a farce. The two armies, that of William and that of Louis, had marched and countermarched, advanced and retreated, without coming to an engagement, and after having thus performed a stately minuet for some months, both armies retired to winter quarters. The Brunswick prince took no part in the campaign, and all this time Prince George Louis, who was very friendly with William, had been sulking over his enforced inaction at home. In October he was seized with a serious

attack of measles.[1] His illness aroused the slumbering sympathies of his wife, and she nursed him towards recovery; doubtless she felt that such conduct was the best answer to the malicious tales of her enemies. Königsmarck was thrown into despair on hearing of the improved relations between Sophie Dorothea and her husband, for his passion for her was very virile and very selfish. He addressed to her this jealous protest:

"With what grief I hear that you have been in other arms than mine! I cannot express what I feel, but it must be so, I suppose; at least, you suffer it with regret, and take care to tell me. I confess I should never have enough power over myself to endure the embraces of a person I did not love; I would rather see all the Furies than an object I detested. However, your promises reassure me of your affection, and give me comfort; without that small consolation I should be miserable indeed. I adore and love you to distraction, yet I must not see you! Are there any torments like this in hell? But I can endure the anguish by remembering my martyrdom is through you, and it is for love of you I suffer: you are well worth the pain. I am wrong to be so disturbed since you assure me of your love. 'What will assure me of your constancy?' Your conduct is the guarantee I ask of you. It is superfluous for me to make new protestations of love and faithfulness, for I have given you solid and convincing proofs; but if, haply, you

[1] Colt's *Despatch*, October $\frac{9}{19}$, 1691.

will not believe these, believe the vows I made you and am ready to make at any time."

Despite this letter, the illness of the Prince made the Princess more friendly with her husband, and this friendliness was accompanied by a coldness on her part towards Königsmarck. When he remonstrated she excused herself on the ground that he had shown her indifference. This called forth the following :

"If I had behaved like you I might be accused of indifference, but when sorrow wears me to a shadow you are cruel to thus accuse me. All the Court is asking me what ails me ; they think my face as haggard as if I were recovering from a serious illness. I have been obliged to pretend that I fell downstairs ; but many will not believe this excuse. Let them think what they please, so long as they do not suspect that the true cause of my illness arises from your injustice and disdainful airs. Do you think me the man to easily condone such conduct? If so, you are mistaken. I would rather go off to the Indies than be treated in this way. If our love were a little fashionable gallantry, well and good ; I should accommodate myself to your moods, and quarrel with you almost every day, but I treat our affair more seriously, and therefore I cannot possibly submit to your coldness. Did I not beg of you, for God's sake, to tell me what ailed you? But I could get nothing from you except, 'Leave me in peace.' I answered, 'No, I will know at any cost.' You then had the courtesy to say, 'Get you gone.' I went at once, with a firm resolution

not to appear before you again unless you positively ordered me. That is why I have not seen you this evening."

The rest of the letter contains requests that he might know how he stood with the Princess, so that he might shape his course accordingly. He was beside himself with jealousy. He could not believe that she had any compassion for her husband, and persisted in looking for the cause of her coldness elsewhere. Especially he resented her attending the opera and taking part in sledge-parties to which he was not invited, and he wrote to Knesebeck complaining bitterly of the Princess's treatment.

The Princess so far relented as to receive from her lover two letters expressing grateful delight at the change of her conduct; but his delight apparently was not unalloyed. When Prince George Louis was better, the Princess left to visit the Duke and Duchess of Celle at Wienhausen,[1] another country place of the Duke's a short distance from Celle. From Wienhausen she went to Celle, whither Königsmarck followed her, greatly daring. The Duchess of Celle, who had learned that Königsmarck had neither married nor gone away, and things were apparently much as before, again remonstrated with her daughter, and urged her to break with him definitely. The Duchess did not dream there was anything more than a passing fancy, a little imprudence; but she reminded her daughter that she was surrounded by enemies who

[1] Colt's *Despatch*, November 19, 1691.

would seize on any pretext to encompass her ruin. The Princess saw the force of her mother's reasoning. She had not yet reached that point of passion which takes no count of consequences; but Königsmarck had reached it, and compromise seemed impossible. She implored her lover to leave her, at any rate for a time. Seeming to acquiesce, he wrote:

"[CELLE, undated.]

"I see nothing but ruin before my eyes, but I hope to avert it by a glorious death, which I will seek all over the earth. It is the only thing to pray for now: for since I may not live with you, I will not live at all. I am very grateful to you for undeceiving me about your coolness. You give me back life by assuring me that all they tell you does not turn you against me. . . . I have had a letter from a friend who is in the same state as myself,—that is why he is going to the Morea.[1] If Fortune does not change, I shall go on that expedition with him, and, I hope, never return. Perchance you may be kind enough to have a memorial erected for me; if so, do not forget to inscribe on it that I welcomed death with joy, because I was forbidden to look into your beautiful eyes. Ah, Madame! how you make me suffer! Are these the delights of love?

*Amour vois les mos que tu fais*
*Aux où les biens que tus promes*
*Natus pas pitié de ma peine?*[2]

[1] Troops were being sent to the Morea at this time, and Prince Christian, son of the Duke of Hanover, wished to go with them. He did not go.—*Vide* Colt's despatches.

[2] This is a literal rendering of Königsmarck's French.

When wilt thou have pity? When shall I overcome thy coldness? Wilt thou ever keep from me the rapture of tasting perfect joy? I seek it in thy arms; and if I may not taste it there, I care for naught else. No! if I may not be happy with you, I will not be happy at all. If fortune were to destine me to a kingdom, I would not care for it without you. On the contrary, if I desire anything for myself, to win renown, to push myself to great estate, it is only for the love of you and in the hope that you may love me more, for an insignificant lover without high employment cannot hope to be long in the good graces of a lady of your rank. If God spare my life, I vow I will remain a constant lover, and advance in dignity and honour. You see, Madame, I have a good opinion of myself. Know this: when one wishes to climb for the love of the lovely one, one succeeds or one sinks utterly; it will be one or the other with me. My resolve to leave you is not consistent with such tender love, I admit; but you suffer too much on my account. I should be the cruellest man on earth were I not to go away, and so give you a little relief from the persecution you are suffering; for when my enemies see me no longer happy, they will cease from tattling. But will absence injure me with you? Are you a woman who can still love without seeing the loved one? Will my envious enemies succeed in their infamous designs? Will you forsake me?"

The Princess was so much frightened at the thought that her lover was going on another perilous campaign

in the Morea, where he had narrowly escaped death the year before, and where Prince Charles was slain, that she recalled her words and wrote begging him to stay. Königsmarck at once seized the advantage he had gained; he became bolder and more definite in his demands. For every inch the Princess yielded he took an ell. He answered:

"You know only too well that I should not go away except on your account, and since you ask me to stay I will do so with joy. My greatest delight is to pay you my court. But, Madame, you are unjust to imagine I love you no longer. Is it for people we do not love that we change our moods and plans? Is it because I do not love you I suffer no end of humiliation, anxiety, and sorrow? I am not so unjust as you; I like to believe that you love me. There are many men who would not believe all you say took place, but for myself I set such store on everything you tell me that I believe it like the Gospel. Rest assured that my love is above all things. I see you in so tender a mood that I cannot find words to thank you enough, though I fear you are willing to let me continue in misery, even though you no longer fear your parents' preachments. You are too charming, my divine Princess. I am so touched that I rule myself wholly according to your will. I would leave my head on the scaffold rather than neglect anything you may wish me to do. I had very little opportunity of speaking to you yesterday, yet I was much relieved, for the only sign I received, though given in haste,

reassured me so much that I slept soundly. It is the first time I have slept since I came to Celle. . . . Commune with your heart : if it be true to me, it will encourage you to do something bold. Courage, Madame ; see me for once—no more—half a quarter of an hour. I wish to thank you on my knees for your constancy. It is the only thing I ask you. But do not risk anything for me ; it might spoil all. It is better to suffer a little while than always."

That his prayer was granted may be gathered from the following :

"The moments seem to me centuries. I cannot watch the daylight without raging. Why do not the hours shut up into moments ? What would I not give for twelve o'clock to strike ? Be sure to have ready *de l'eau de la reine d'Hongrie*, for fear my rapture may make me swoon away. What ! I shall embrace to-night the loveliest of women. I shall kiss her charming mouth. I shall worship her eyes, those eyes that enslave me. I shall hear from her very lips that she loves me. I shall have the joy of embracing her knees ; my tears will chase down her incomparable cheeks. I shall hold in my arms the most beautiful body in the world. Verily, Madame, I shall die of joy. But so long as I have time to tell thee that I die thy slave, I care for naught beside."

# CHAPTER XIII

## *CROSSING THE RUBICON*

(1692)

Bist du mein?
Hab' ich dich wieder?
Darf ich dich fassen?
Kann ich mir trauen?
Endlich! Endlich!

Art thou mine?
Do I behold thee?
Do I embrace thee?
Can I believe it?
At last! At last!

*Tristan und Isolde.*

WHILE the Princess was still at Celle an event happened at Hanover which created much excitement. Colt writes: "The gates have been shut for two days at Hanover, accompanied with a great consternation. Yet first the two Moltkes were brought to Court under a guard, where they are kept close, and all their papers taken. One is Jagermaster,[1] and hath been employed in the business with the Duke of Saxe-Gotha; and the other was Lieutenant-Colonel, and had waited upon the Prince Max; and there is also secured a secretary to the Duke of Wolfenbüttel,

[1] Grand Master ot the Hunt.

who formerly served Prince Augustus, the Duke's second son, who was killed in Transylvania. And next day Prince Max was secured under guard in his chamber, none of his servants being suffered to come near him ; but the Duchess, who is under great affliction, and the Duke sayd publicly that there were designs against his person and Government, and many storeys are dispersed about." [1]

The story circulated by authority was that Count Moltke, who was in waiting on the Duke, had presented a snuff-box to His Highness when he was playing at quadrille. The Duke, suspecting something wrong, asked the Count to take his cards for a moment, and going into the adjoining room gave a pinch of the snuff to a pet spaniel, with the result that the dog immediately expired. When he had given some hurried orders, the Duke returned to the card-table, and presently told Count Moltke that some one was waiting for him without. When the Count went out of the room, he found himself a prisoner, and his arrest was followed by that of his brother, the Wolfenbüttel secretary, and Prince Maximilian.

This was the rumour industriously spread abroad ; but it was not correct. Moltke had made no attempt against the life of his sovereign ; but he had undoubtedly plotted against his authority. The old question of the union of the Dukedoms of Celle and Hanover, and the settling of all territory on Prince George Louis to the exclusion of his younger brothers, had cropped up again. This was the Duke

[1] Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, December 8, 1691.

of Hanover's darling scheme, a necessary step towards the coveted Electorate, and he would allow nothing to come between him and his ambition. The younger princes stoutly opposed it and rebelled. The Duke of Wolfenbüttel secretly abetted them, because primogeniture would add largely to the future aggrandisement of Hanover; and even the Duchess Sophia regarded the plan with dislike, as it pressed so hardly on her younger sons. Prince Augustus being dead, it now fell on Prince Max, the third son, to rebel, and Count Moltke and his brother aided and abetted him. The Wolfenbüttel secretary was also implicated; the plot was almost ripe, and a rising was planned, when the conspirators were betrayed by a double traitor, who had wormed himself into their confidence by pretending to be their friend. An outbreak of the populace was feared, for the people's sympathies were with the young princes in their resistance to this innovation, and Prince George Louis was unpopular.

The Duke of Hanover's resentment was very great, especially against his cousins of Wolfenbüttel, with whom all relations were abruptly broken off. Prince Max continuing mutinous, and, vowing he would never submit, was kept a closer prisoner than ever; his guards were doubled and his mother forbidden to go near him. Indeed, she herself was suspected and examined before the Council. It has been said that the Princess Sophie Dorothea was implicated too, and Moltke was offered his liberty if he would confess her share in the business, but he refused and denied. The suggestion was probably made at the instigation of the

Countess Platen, who would start any lie against the Princess. There is no authority for the statement; Colt in his long account of the affair does not even mention the Princess's name. She was at Celle at the time the plot was discovered, and both the Duke and Duchess of Celle were in favour of the ultimate settlement by primogeniture of the dukedoms on Prince George Louis, seeing that he had wedded their daughter, and the children were their only descendants.

The Princess and her children came back to Hanover with her parents early in January for the carnival. "The Court of Celle arrived here last night," writes Colt, "and were received with extra kindness, much different to what I have seen since I have been in these parts, and they seem to bind all their thoughts to secure the union of these two dukedoms."[1] And again: "The Court of Celle will continue here for some time, and the Duke and Duchess of Celle shew an extraordinary fondness for their daughter and grandchildren."[2]

By this time Prince Max had been sent away as a prisoner to the Castle of Hamelin, and after a good deal of blustering had promised to submit to paternal authority under certain conditions. Further inquiries revealed that the plot was an old one and had many branches. Duke Antony Ulrich had been the moving power, and both the dead princes, Augustus and Charles, were inculpated. The feeling at the Hanoverian Court ran strongly against Duke Antony

[1] Colt's *Despatch*, Hanover, January 5, 1692.
[2] *Ibid.*, January 8, 1692.

Ulrich, and even the Duchess Sophia found herself exposed to resentment, though nothing could be proved against her, poor lady, beyond that, having a mother's heart, she had helped her unruly sons now and then out of her slender pin money (not that she had much to give—Countess Platen saw to that), when their father had cast them out with the proverbial shilling. It must have been a sore time for the proud, high-spirited Duchess. To add a spice more of bitterness to her cup, the Duchess of Celle was now at Hanover, a witness of the humiliation of her rival, and herself flattered and courted. It may be doubted if Eléonore had sufficient magnanimity not to vaunt her triumph ; yet she would have done well to be humble in the days of her prosperity, for even at this, its apogee, there was a far more dangerous intrigue than any Prince Max was involved in, secretly but surely undermining her future happiness, and threatening to bring disaster on her cherished schemes and ruin and dishonour on all most dear to her.

But whatever misery and wretchedness lay behind the scenes, externally the Court of Hanover was as gay and brilliant as ever. The New Year opened as usual with the carnival, an Italian opera, and a series of festivities, in which all took part, from the Court down to the common people. The taverns were thronged with mummers and masqueraders, the streets of the old town were bright with booths and bunting, and a large concourse of merrymakers flocked to Hanover from the surrounding towns and villages. The nobility came from their country estates, and

many of the neighbouring princes and princesses came for the carnival too. In all these festivities Sophie Dorothea was the central figure. Every one paid court to the beautiful young Princess of Hanover, who, high in the favour of her parents and the Duke of Hanover, triumphed for the moment over her enemies and seemed to gather up in herself and her children all the brilliant hopes of the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg.

The children formed the strong link of the alliance between Celle and Hanover. Even the Duchess of Celle had come to see that, however much in her heart she might dislike the Duchess Sophia and the Hanoverian influence, henceforth their interests were to a great extent identical. The young Prince George Augustus was now nine, the little Princess Sophie Dorothea five ; they were her grandchildren and the representatives of the fast accumulating dignities of the House. The future union of the dukedoms was settled, the Electorate of Hanover was almost assured, the Crown of England, now that William and Mary had ascended the throne, no longer a mere mirage. Who could tell to what brilliant future these children might not be destined ? Her descendants—the descendants of the hated and despised Eléonore—the "Frenchwoman," the "*canaille*," the "little clot of dirt"—might live to ascend the mightiest thrones of Europe.[1] These considerations might well give

[1] As, in point of fact, they did, George Augustus as George II. of Great Britain ; Sophie Dorothea as Queen of Prussia, and mother of Frederick the Great.

Duchess Eléonore pause, and make her watch closely the conduct of her daughter, lest by folly or indiscretion she might blight her career and injure the prospects of her children. She again spoke to the Princess and urged her to avoid Königsmarck. The Princess-Dowager of East Friesland, who, with her daughter-in-law, had come to Hanover (ostensibly for the carnival, in reality to try to smooth things down between the Dukes of Hanover and Wolfenbüttel), also repeated certain rumours she had heard to the Duchess of Celle, who in turn communicated them to her daughter. The Princess was frightened, and directed Knesebeck to tell Königsmarck of what had passed, and to impress on him the need of greater caution in the future. Königsmarck wrote :

"[Hanover, *February.*]

"I am extremely surprised to learn from La Confidente all that has happened. As I had heard nothing from you, I was in despair ; but when your letter came it was so loving that I will not hint at what I feared most. I again picked up a little courage. What worries me most is that your mother has been preaching at you ; for though she may be on your side she is sure to watch you closely, and when she learns that you have been talking to me she will become more suspicious, and I fear will tell everything to the Duke. Try to prevent that, or we are lost for ever. I am grieved to be the cause of all this trouble. But you are so sweet and charming, it is not my fault ; you must blame yourself for having made in

A STREET IN HANOVER. [*To face p.* 232.

(*Where Königsmarck is said to have lived.*)

me such an unlucky choice. It is cruel to think that while everybody can make love to you, and you can speak to whom you will without any fault-finding, I am the only one excluded. When I think how your mother encourages Monsieur Welling,[1] on the one hand, and on the other forbids me to speak to you, I am so enraged that I could stab her, and I wish her a thousand times a day to the devil. If the earth were to open and swallow her and the Dowager[2] up, how glad I should be! I believe all the fiends plot together to annoy me, but they will not succeed if only you remain faithful. I can patiently endure all things so long as you do not change, but I fear they will terrify you so that in the end they will succeed in their diabolical plans. How I hate them! Were I lord of the thunderbolts there would be many grey heads battered about; but as I am not, I can only implore you to hate all those who are working against me, and urging you to forget me. You will not refuse this prayer if you have any love left for me. If you wish, I will go away to some village near, for I cannot veil my eyes so that the world does not see my adoration; but if you will suffer me even to look at you, you will give me joy,—without that I cannot stay. Be merciful and write to me. Forget not to assure me of your love, for now is the time; if your heart begins to cool, the plotters will succeed in their infamous designs.

[1] "Baron Welling is come hither to prepare matters."—Colt's *Despatch*, Hanover, January, 1692.

[2] The Princess-Dowager of East Friesland. "The two Princesses of East Frise [Friesland] arrived yesterday."—Colt's *Despatch*, Hanover, February 9, 1692.

"Now as to reproaches. You might have spoken to me coming out of the Princess's[1] door, for your father had already retired, and there would have been no danger on account of the Prince. But terror prevented you; I know you so well. I have everything to fear; every one plots against me, men and demons, and even old women, who are worse than demons."

The Princess was torn by conflicting emotions—her infatuation on the one hand, and her dread of discovery on the other. She had not yet capitulated wholly; but under the impetuous assaults of her lover the outworks were falling one by one, the citadel would soon be stormed. While she was hesitating, the carnival broke up, and Sophie Dorothea returned with her parents to Celle. The Duchess Sophia seems to have gone too.[2]

The Duke of Hanover had an object in sending "all the women" out of the way, for he wished to try his prisoners and bring Prince Max to his knees—things he could do better when freed from feminine influence. He soon succeeded, for Prince Max renounced all, and the prisoners were found guilty and sent back to their prison to wait sentence. The Duke of Hanover then went to join his brother at Celle, where much company were assembled, including the Duke and Duchess of Saxe-Eisenach. Königsmarck was there too, perhaps in the suite of the Duke of Hanover, possibly on a visit to his brother-in-law,

[1] The Princess of East Friesland.

[2] "The Duke of Hanover hath sent all the women hither."—Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, February 23, 1692.

Count Lewenhaupt, to whom the Duke of Celle had recently given the command of a regiment of Foot.[1]

Königsmarck was, of course, invited to all the Court festivities at Celle, and had many opportunities of meeting the Princess. But she was on her guard in public, so much so that the Duchess of Celle could detect nothing definite, though she seems to have sounded Königsmarck, if we may judge from his next letter to the Princess. In this letter appears the first hint of an idea which gradually matured in the Princess's mind side by side with the growth of her passion—namely, that she and her lover should escape by flight from a situation intolerable to both.

"[CELLE, *March.*]

"La Confidente will tell you that I was more than satisfied yesterday, though I had no other delight than pressing your hand. Our restraint has its charms, for though the last few days I have seen you only in places where even the language of the eyes is scarcely possible, I have had many happy moments. What a delight, *ma petite*, for us to be able to communicate with impunity in the presence of thousands of people! What a delight! Speak to me a little more in the same way, but only when there is no risk, for I should be sore distressed to cause you more trouble than I do already. . . . Keep in the same mind as you were yesterday, and though the whole

[1] "The Duke of Celle hath at last given the new-raised regiment of Foot to the Count Lewenhaupt, a Swede, brother-in-law to Count Königsmarck, who commands a regiment of Hanover."—Colt's *Despatch*, January 22, 1692.

world conspire against us, never mind so long as we love one another. They will soon tire of preaching at you, and then we shall enjoy perfect peace. I have not yet seen Aurora, but I shall know all from her. I have had a long conversation with the Duchess of Celle. I believe her to be the most deceitful of women. She says the prettiest things to me, yet all the time she is doing her best to ruin me with you. I hope to Heaven she will not succeed! Do not believe all these women may tell you, for they will make every effort to set you against me. But I should be wrong to doubt you *after the proposition you made to me—that you are willing to leave all this pomp and splendour and retire with me to some corner of the world.* After that I have nothing to fear. I accept your offer with joy. You have only to say the word and I am ready. If the result of your parents' persecution be to force you to take such a step, I hope they will persecute you a hundred times more, so that you may act promptly. Why should we not fly to-night?

"Surely, Madame, my manner towards the Duchess of Saxe-Eisenach[1] must have shown you that my heart is all yours, and no other beauty can find place there, not even that princess. I hope you have no cause to complain of my behaviour to the other ladies here. It is true I flattered His Highness's mistress,[2] in the hope she would tell me what she was about, but she would not say anything. I stand

[1] "The Duke and Duchess of Saxe-Eisenach are come hither."—Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, March 4, 1692.

[2] Countess Platen.

well with Monseigneur,[1] and he shows me more courtesy than usual."

The Princess, during the next few days at Celle, seems to have behaved with more circumspection. In this she was only obeying the dictates of common prudence. Nevertheless her precautions called forth the following remonstrances :—

"I imagined that in possessing your love I should be the happiest man in the world. I little thought I should have so few opportunities of speaking to you. I tell you frankly this continual restraint falls far short of perfect felicity, and my happiness will never be complete until I enter upon it wholly. Believe me, this is true. I was speaking to La Confidente about it last night ; she will tell you my wishes anon. I have to talk to you just like every one else, and precautions have to be taken, though they wound and vex us. Let us hope for better times, for until then we are doomed to suffer. Meanwhile forget nothing that will give me comfort, and assure me of your tender love ; you cannot do this better than in letting me see you as often as possible. Did you really notice how the Duchess of Saxe-Eisenach attacked me? I hope when I have answered her two or three times as curtly as possible, she will clearly understand that I want no intercourse with her."

"Your kind note assures me of your tender love

[1] Duke of Celle.

and assurances must suffice for the present. But, Madame, I am not the man to let myself be made sport of, and if your promises do not agree with your conduct they will not make the slightest impression on me. You have not treated me very well the last two days, and I cannot quite believe your notes; but if you change your manners, I am quite ready to accept your protestations. I am forced to assume an extremely distant manner towards you, and it makes me furious; I wish you could alter it, but you cannot. Pardon me once more. It is my hot temper—I know it, but you are the cause."

Königsmarck's "hot temper" seems to have led him into a breach of good manners, for later we find him writing:

"If you could see my despair you would forgive me the fault I have just committed. I was piqued and annoyed because you would not deign to look at me once during the play, though I sat immediately opposite. I do not deserve your haughty airs; the sacrifice I have made for you of the Duchess of Saxe-Eisenach[1] at least deserved a glance. You can see for yourself that I hardly look at her, and when she speaks to me I answer her very briefly, so as to cut short any further conversation. Her lady-in-waiting says that the Duchess finds me much changed. But a truce to all that; it is not worth speaking about.

[1] "The Courts of Hanover and Saxe-Eisenach go from hence after to-morrow; there has been much company here for several days."—Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, March 8, 1692.

Give me pardon, Princess, I implore you, and arrange for me to see you to-morrow. I could hardly get a glimpse of you, for the dancing made me very hot, and, as I was unable to change my linen, I did not like to come near you. This is a poor excuse, and I can only throw myself upon your mercy. La Confidente will intercede for me. I hovered outside your apartments for half an hour to see if La Confidente were coming out. I wanted to knock at your back door, but I dared not. What torment for me to miss the society of my adored one! What a night I shall spend! *Grand Dieu!* what was I thinking about? What demon possessed me? If you will not forgive me you will drive me to despair. I shall go away at once and weep over my sins in the regiment, so let me know my fate. Farewell, my dearest one. Shall I dare to call you so again? Verily I do not deserve that privilege. I am in torment. When will you send me an answer? For the love of Heaven, let me have one soon."

The Princess forgave him, probably on the morrow, and how fully may be gathered from the following rapturous epistle :

"I slept like a king, and I hope you did the same. What joy! what rapture! what enchantment have I not tasted in your sweet arms! Ye gods! what a night I spent! The memory of it blots out all my troubles, and for the moment I count myself the happiest man on earth. You see, it rests wholly with you to make me happy, and when I am sad you are the cause.

Adieu, dear heart. How long the day will seem to me without seeing you! Adieu."

And he wrote later the same day:

"Verily I am overwhelmed by the tokens of love you have vouchsafed to me. I shall never be able to show you my gratitude, but shall always be your debtor. I love and I am loved. Is there any bliss approaching mine? I count myself the happiest of mortals, and even of the gods. Ah! most beautiful one! The tenderness you have shown me compels me to love you, and makes me despise the favours of good and the caprices of bad fortune. Time will bring no change in my love. I would abandon for you all ties—family, relations, women, even wife and children had I any. My passion intoxicates me. I can no longer think—words fail. I commit myself to your keeping; do with me as you will. I can scarcely keep my heart within bounds; it strives perpetually to burst away and thank you for its captivity, for it loves to be the slave of one who treats it so generously. I fear I shall lose it altogether, but as I cannot live without a heart, for pity's sake, Madame, give me yours in return, for without one or the other I shall die. Do not put off my seeing you this evening, I beseech you. You have convinced me so deeply that you love me, that I have never loved you so much before. You have never appeared to me so altogether lovely. With crossed hands and bended knees I thank you for all you have vouchsafed unto me. Suffer me therefore

to see you again to-day, and do not put me off. I should die.

"The Prince went away to-day at eight o'clock. He is angry because you wished to remain with your mother. All goes wonderfully well. Farewell."

On the return of the Court to Hanover, Duke Ernest Augustus concentrated his energies on obtaining the long-deferred Electorate, and he made the electoral bonnet a positive condition to his rejoining the Allies. William of Orange was already at the Hague, busily making arrangements for the forthcoming campaign of 1692. He found that Denmark and Sweden threatened to become actively hostile. Brandenburg was sullen, and Saxony disaffected. He could therefore ill afford to lose the services of the Duke of Hanover, and had again to promise him his support and influence with the Emperor for the Electorate. But Ernest Augustus wanted something more than promises. "This Duke," writes Colt, "is certainly resolved to make all things as sure as he can with the Emperor before he lets his troops stir out of the country."[1] The Duke of Celle, who was warmly on the side of the Allies, generously waived his claim as elder brother to the Electorate, seeing that his younger brother could be gained on no other terms. But still the Emperor hesitated. He knew that the French agent was at Hanover, and intrigues were on foot with Denmark and Sweden, and he stipulated that

[1] Colt's *Despatch*, Hanover, April 15, 1692.

the Duke should first declare against France. As neither side trusted the other, negotiations did not advance very quickly.

In the meantime Königsmarck went on one of his frequent journeys to Hamburg, ostensibly to visit his estate hard by, probably to combine pleasure with his business. Hamburg was then a strongly fortified town much frequented by the princes of northern Germany. Some ten years previously the first theatre in Germany for operas was opened at Hamburg, and this helped to make it a favourite resort of the gay world. Just at this time it gained a special importance, as it was the meeting-place of many of the representatives of the great Alliance, including several German princes and the disaffected northern Powers who came thither to intrigue concerning the coming campaign. Königsmarck's visit might possibly have had something of a diplomatic nature, but no hint of this appears in his letters. His relations with the Princess had continued in unbroken harmony, if we may judge from the little note he sent her on the eve of his leaving :

"[HANOVER : undated.]

"I should deem myself all unworthy of your love were I to go away without assuring you how deeply I am sensible of your kindness. Yes, beautiful mouth, you love me, I doubt no longer, and my bliss is perfect. I start with that belief only. . . . The letter inclosed from Hamburg will show how things are going with my sister. I will write you more fully. I kiss your hands. I am all yours."

The ensuing letters which he wrote to the Princess when on this journey explain themselves :

"Hamburg, *March* 22.

"I have reached here at last, after great trouble and danger, for about a league from Hanover my carriage broke down, and in crossing the Elbe I thought I should have been drowned. My servants had taken lodgings at the inn to which I usually come, and to crown all, I found that the Princess d'Otfrise[1] and the Duchess of Saxe-Eisenach were lodged there. I was greatly puzzled what to do, for they sent word for me to come and dine with them ; but, my dear little heart, I remembered my promise to you, and determined to decamp. So I pretended that I had pressing and urgent business which compelled me to leave at once, and, without seeing them, I marched off and changed my quarters. But I did not leave the town, for I found my brother-in-law and sister[2] here. I gave my sister an exact account of all that had taken place since she left, and she did the same to me. . . .

"To come to my story, they say I named you personally.[3] You know the rest. I need not justify myself to you ; you know me too well. I am now trying to find the author of this underhand business. Should I unearth him, I will avenge myself in a way that will make others careful not to invent any

[1] East Friesland. Colt sometimes calls her "Otfrise" too.

[2] Count and Countess Lewenhaupt.

[3] It is worthy of note that the same charge, boasting when he was in his cups, of his intimacy with the Princess was made against Königsmarck two years later (1694) at the Court of Dresden.

more lies. My brother-in-law also has a little matter to settle. Some one said in his cups: 'Oh, truly, when one has a sister-in-law who sleeps with a prince one can soon have regiments.'[1] They say that the author of this story is Lieutenant-Colonel Grot, or little Count Steinbock. We shall demand an explanation sword in hand, and see what they will say. I leave to-morrow for my estate. Farewell."

"*En Route.*

"On dismounting here they gave me three of your letters. Picture my joy! I had begun to think that you had quite forgotten me. M. de Bielke has begged me to come to supper with him, but as some ladies with whom I used to flirt will be there, I am not going, for I want to have the satisfaction of swearing to you that all the time I am away I have not said sweet things to any woman whatsoever. . . . Do not write to me any more. Two of your letters have been sealed with another seal, and that makes me fear. I will show them to you."

"*Monday evening at* REINBEK.[2]

"As I again catch the post here I cannot let it go without writing, and I think this letter will reach you sooner than the one I sent this morning by my servant. Let us unite against those who would break us asunder; they will tire when they see our constancy. It is distraction to have no news from you and to be unable to hold you in my arms. I must

[1] This refers to Aurora von Königsmarck and the recent appointment of Count Lewenhaupt to a regiment of Celle.

[2] Reinbek is a village close to Hamburg.

arm myself with patience, little by little, for I am sore afraid that this summer I shall have to exercise myself greatly in that virtue. The postillion is on horseback. If I could be in his place I could see you by dinner-time, but as it is I cannot until after to-morrow I am raging that old Time should lag so much. I spend every evening in miserable inns. Since I left Hanover I have only slept on straw; but (think of my impertinence!), uncomfortable though I was, every moment I wished you with me, without thinking that you would be uncomfortable too. If my desire had come to pass I should have pitied you; for you would often have been very badly off for a bed, and roughly lodged. Farewell. I shall die if I do not see you soon."[1]

On his return Königsmarck renewed his court to the Princess, with varying fortune as before.

Great military activity now prevailed at Hanover and Celle. The Duke of Hanover, satisfied that the Electorate was to come soon, at last declared for the Allies. The diplomacy of William of Orange had triumphed all along the line. The Brunswick princes were sending troops to Flanders. Saxony had been bribed with a present of one hundred thousand rix-dollars and the promise of the Garter. Brandenburg had been conciliated; and, last and most difficult of all, Denmark and Sweden were appeased for awhile. But these negotiations lost time; and while the Allies were haggling and William conciliating

[1] The letter concludes with many more expressions of devotion.

Louis again took the field. In vain William tried to hasten his confederate princes; they were late as usual in sending troops. The French king started on his campaign, and his progress resembled a triumphal march. To gratify his love of display, Louis held a grand review near Mons, the scene of his triumph the previous year. The pageant over, he set forth to lay siege to Namur. Fully alive to the advantage gained by the French, King William made every effort to hurry up his laggard allies, with the result that the troops of the several princes gradually took the field.

The troops of Celle and Hanover were to be commanded by Prince George Louis, and preparations at Hanover were pushed forward with all speed. Königsmarck was to go with his regiment; but to the astonishment of all he manifested no enthusiasm to serve in the campaign, and lingered until the eleventh hour. His letter to the Princess will explain his conduct. Knowing how she was spied upon, and doubtful of her strength and his, the Princess was afraid to risk a parting in private. He writes:

"[HANOVER, *June.*]

"The reluctance you have shown to speak to me surprises me; nay, more, it makes me tremble. But I will still try to believe that you could not do otherwise without giving ground for suspicion. Yet one should risk something when it is a question of "Good-bye" for six months.[1] I think so, for instead

[1] The Hanoverian troops were away about six months—June to late October.

of going I linger here. See how much I love you! I neglect my duty, which calls me away for the rest of the year, though it is so urgent that I ought to go at once. But, my dear one, how can I leave without bidding you adieu? My love does not suffer me—I would rather die. I will not reproach you; I will keep silence and watch you at the games, for Madame la Princesse must play, apparently! I will go; but it must be from your lovely eyes that I learn my fate. If you do not like to *say* "Good-bye," let me see it in your eyes,—they will give me light. Unless I cruelly deceive myself, I shall find much love in them. If I had sufficient self-control could I not have gone away—could I not have had orders so pressing that it would have been impossible for me to return, or perchance an illness which would have excused me from bidding you farewell? Yet I am glad that you give me the opportunity of showing you how much stronger my love is than yours. I am truly your slave, and wear your chains with joy."

And again:

"I cannot leave Hanover without writing to you, yet to write renews my grief. The torments of hell would not pain me more than distance and absence from you. How happy I should be if I could be as one of the least of your servants, to be near you, to hear your voice! I would willingly change my condition for the common sentinel, for at least I could stand under your windows and worship you from there. Alas! that cannot be; and since I am

destined to suffer, assure me of your love and constancy. Adieu."

At last Königsmarck tore himself away, and left Hanover for the camp, to march on the morrow to Flanders. At this point the Princess's letters begin.

## CHAPTER XIV

### *THE PRINCESS'S LETTERS*

My letters! all dead paper, mute and white!
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

I can but do as wills the spirit in me,
Which is your spirit's servant. Ah! my lord,
My one love every way, my poor heart's blood,
Breath of my lips, and eyesight of mine eyes,
How did I live the life that loved you not?
SWINBURNE.

THE Duke of Hanover, astute time-server that he was, must have doubted at first whether he had done wisely in again throwing in his lot with King William, for victory everywhere attended the arms of Louis. The French king made rapid progress with the siege of Namur, and on the eighth day the virgin fortress surrendered to his conquering army. The citadel fell three weeks later. This victory marked the summit of the great monarch's glory. Te Deums were sung in all the churches of France, and his camp rang with shouts of triumph. But even in this hour of victory there came to Louis a reminder that he was not everywhere invincible; for while he lay before Namur, his priests chanting, his cannon blaring, sounds of rejoicing reached him from the camp of the Allies—rejoicings over the naval victory

of La Hogue, wherein the English admiral, Russell, had utterly routed the French ships, and shattered for ever James II.'s chances of reascending the throne of England. The French king affected to treat this reverse lightly, and a short time after retired to Versailles, leaving Luxemburg, the first general of France, in command of the army.

William hastened towards Namur in the hope of bringing relief, but he was too late. Between him and the already fallen fortress lay the troops of Luxemburg. The grand army of the Allies then took up their headquarters at Lambeque, and William was sometimes there and sometimes at Brussels. About six miles from Lambeque, at Steinkirk, Luxemburg had encamped with the main body of the French army. Thus the two armies remained throughout July, almost within sight of one another; but the country between was full of hedges and ditches, and neither would make the attack. The delay gave William one advantage: it afforded time for the laggard troops of his German allies to come up.

The Hanoverian troops, commanded by Prince George Louis and accompanied by Prince Christian, fifth son of the Duke,[1] and with Königsmarck in command of a regiment of foot-guards, began their march to Flanders the first week in June. On the day they set out the Duke of Hanover, accompanied by Prince George Louis and the English envoy Colt, went to the camp and held a grand review.

[1] For whom the Duchess Sophia wished the command of an English regiment, which he did not get.

The Duke of Hanover ordered a general thanksgiving to celebrate the victory of La Hogue and so testify his fidelity to the English king. To set the seal upon it, Colt gave a magnificent entertainment, a banquet and a ball. He writes :

" The Duke and Duchess with all their Courts have done me the honour to sup with me, when they and the greatest part of the city proclaimed their affection and good will to His Majesty." And again : " My share in the affair [the general rejoicings] you will see at large in the paper apart [probably the bill] which I hope will be approved of. I have on this occasion given a greater diversion than ever they saw in this place." [1]

Sophie Dorothea was present at Colt's entertainment and took part in the festivities. Her husband, who went to Brockhausen after the review to take leave of the Duke of Celle, came back to Hanover on purpose to attend the celebrations, and a few days later he set out for Flanders. The Princess then left Hanover on a visit to her parents at Brockhausen ; she remained there for some weeks. Prince Maximilian was also staying with the Duke of Celle, still in disgrace with his father, and urging his uncle to use his influence to save Moltke's life. His prayers were unavailing. Moltke was executed at Hanover in the second week of July, and the Court went to Luisburg—a country palace of the Duke of Hanover, about twenty leagues distant—to be out of the way.

All this time, from the day of their parting, the

[1] Colt's *Despatches*, Hanover, June 20, 1692.

Princess was in constant correspondence with Königsmarck, who was marching with his regiment to Flanders. He joined the grand army near Brussels about the middle of July, and his letters to the Princess were written from the camp and different halting-places on the line of march, while she wrote to him from Hanover and Brockhausen.

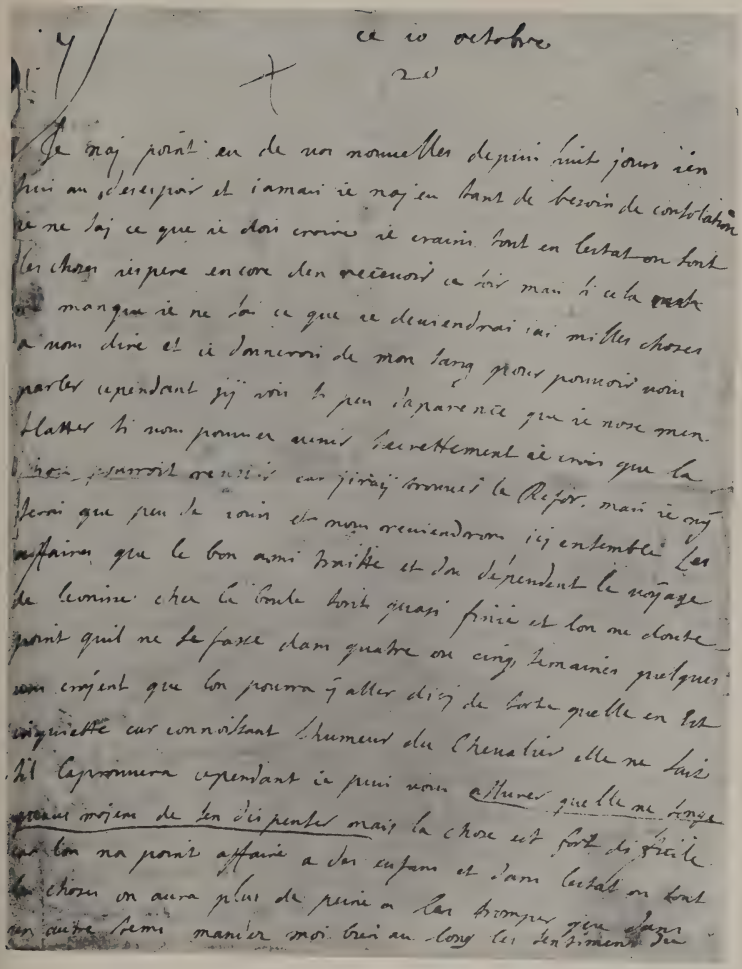
Whatever restraint Sophie Dorothea may have put upon herself in public converse with her lover, no trace of it appears in her letters. Believing that she was writing to him alone, she pours forth her soul in absolute abandonment. She gives herself to him so completely, so unreservedly, and withal so intimately, that one almost shrinks from laying bare this confession of woman's love for man.

*The Princess to Königsmarck.*

"[HANOVER, undated.]

"I spent the stillness of the night without sleeping, and all the day thinking of you, weeping over our separation. Never did a day seem so long to me; I do not know how I shall ever get reconciled to your absence. La Gouvernante[1] has just given me your letter; I received it with rapture. Rest assured I will do even more than I have promised, and lose no opportunity of showing you my love. If I could shut myself up while you are away and see no one, I would do so gladly, for without you everything is distasteful and wearisome. Nothing can make your

[1] This must have been another name for the Fräulein von Knesebeck, *La Confidente.*



FACSIMILE OF ONE OF THE PRINCESS'S LETTERS TO KÖNIGSMARCK.

*Photographed from the original manuscript in the University Library at Lund.*

NOTE.—It is impossible to say whether this letter is in the Princess's handwriting, or written at her dictation by Fräulein von Knesebeck.

[*To face p.* 252.

absence bearable to me ; I am faint with weeping. I hope to prove by my life that no woman has ever loved man as I love you, and no faithfulness will ever equal mine. In spite of every trial and all that may befall, nothing will sever me from you. Of a truth, dear one, my love will only end with my life.

"I was so changed and depressed to-day that even the Prince, my husband, pitied me, and said I was ill and ought to take care of myself. He is right,—I am ill ; but my illness comes only from loving you, and I never wish to be cured. I have not seen any one worth mentioning. I went to visit the Duchess [Sophia] for a little while, but returned home as soon as possible, to have the joy of talking about you.[1] La Gazelle's husband[2] came to wish me good-bye; I saw him in my chamber, and he kissed my hand.

"It is now eight o'clock, and I must go and pay my court. How dull I shall seem !—how stupid ! I shall withdraw immediately after supper, so that I may have the pleasure of reading your letters again, the only pleasure I have while you are away. Farewell, my worshipped one. Only death will sever me from you ; all human powers will never succeed. Remember all your promises, and be as constant as I will be faithful."

"[Hanover], *June* 12, *Sunday.*

"I have no news of you ; I am restless, in despair, full of sad forebodings. I cannot believe that you

[1] *I.e.* with *La Confidente.*

[2] *La Gazelle* may have been Countess von Lewenhaupt (so called because of her gazelle-like eyes), whose husband was about to march with the Duke of Celle's troops to Flanders.

would willingly neglect me, you have so deeply convinced me of your faithfulness; but I love you too fondly to be free from the anxiety inseparable from such love. I am not getting reconciled to your absence; it is intolerable, and nothing can equal my grief at being so far from my adored one. I deluded myself with the hope that I might have seen you after the review; I could have done so in all liberty, as the Prince was away. That false hope made me keep vigil two nights at the window, and every one who passed I fancied was you. La Confidente kept telling me differently, but I would hear no reason.

"I must give you an account of my day. I retired after dinner. In the evening there was music, and I played a little,—that is all. You must be pleased with my conduct. . . . Do not forget your oaths, nor let absence lessen the love you swore to me, for I love you to madness, and the mere thought that you may forget is enough to upset my reason. Above all, be faithful to me, or I shall die. The Duchess to-day spoke much of your beauty and the regularity of your features. Alas! I fear me others will discover this comeliness too; it will cost me many tears.

"I must end this. It is three o'clock, and I must go to bed. Never doubt my fidelity; it is inviolable. I will live and die yours only."

*Königsmarck to the Princess.*

"[The Camp, undated.]

"You must let me complain, *ma chérie*, of the mean farewell you gave me. My love deserved something

far different ; but if you had a heart of ice you could not have given me a colder parting. I found the company very lively at the camp, every one sword in hand, prancing to the music of trumpets and kettledrums ; but it all diverted me so little that I wished myself twenty leagues away. My dejection was so apparent that Monsieur Bielke [1] asked me what was the matter, and why I would not drink a glass of wine with him. I told him that I knew he was vexed about Aurora, and I was annoyed too, but I hoped he would not blame me in any way, as I knew nothing about it. He embraced me, and said he was sure I did not, but the pain she had caused him the last two days surpassed everything ; and much more—too long to write—I will keep it for word of mouth. I will only add that he swore awful oaths that he would never speak to her again. The clinking of glasses, the noise of trumpets and kettle-drums,[2] mingled with the softer sound of flutes and the hoarse cries of men drinking, made the drollest harmony in the world ; but the revelry gave me opportunity to hide myself in a corner and dream at will. Whilst the others kissed, embraced, danced, stripped, and jumped on the tables, I thought only of my sad plight, and I found it so miserable that,

[1] "Count Bielke (a Swedish envoy), the most dangerous man in these parts . . . . full of French designs."—*Vide* Colt's *Despatches*, June, 1692.

[2] "According to that old Teutonic fashion with which Shakespeare has made his countrymen familiar, as often as any of the great princes proposed a health, the kettledrums and trumpets sounded."—Macaulay's *History of England*, vol. iv., p. 7.

in spite of all the festivity, tears sprang to my eyes and I was obliged to steal away to go to bed. Three hours of absence from you have grieved me so much that I am no longer master of my heart. I am so overcome with all these emotions that I have been beside myself all the evening."

"[While on the March, undated.]

"In this unpleasant abode nothing could be so dear to me as your dear letter. I read it again and again; I know it by heart, word for word. It is charming and tender, and heals all jealous pains. Be as good as your word, or you will never see your lover alive again.

"I knew the Prince was not returning to Hanover after the review, and therefore determined to take the post to see you, but I was watched so closely by a spy of Countess Platen that I dared not risk it. The post-horses were ordered and ready, but I could not get rid of the man, who is named Mesbuck. You may imagine my rage, for I dreamed of the happiness of surprising you; but my plan miscarried. I have not had a happy moment except those your delightful letter gave me. I am an hour from Detmold. The Count sent a coach with six horses to meet me, and a message to say I would find very pleasant company at his house; but I excused myself on the ground that I was too tired. I did not tell him that love fatigued me. My major went to the party in my stead, and on his return told me all about the company, with whom he was greatly delighted. He praised the ladies

to the skies. Meanwhile I had gone to bed to think over my sorrows. I found them piteous, and trembled to see myself near the brink of an abyss. But why should I worry you? I have told you so many times that I fear your inconstancy, and you have so often reassured me, that I am a fool to doubt; yet I always fear. Water falling drop by drop pierces the most stony heart, and I am sure you will listen to me. You will give me your heart. You must ward off evil at the beginning.

"In bidding farewell to us all, Marshal Podevils[1] spoke to me with much friendliness and sincerity (it was between us alone), and he said something which startled me greatly. He said he believed me to be a man capable of much dissimulation, and he feared I had dissembled with him. I was taken aback, and made him many protestations. He answered that he wished to believe me, and promised his friendship;

[1] Field-Marshal Heinrich von Podevils is spoken of in this correspondence as *le bon ami*, the good friend of Königsmarck and Sophie Dorothea; and indeed he was so. Marshal Podevils was born in 1615 in Pomerania, and took service very early in the Thirty Years War. His military talent was first discovered by the famous Duke Bernard of Saxe-Weimar. At the death of the Duke, Podevils entered the French Army, and advanced rapidly in honour, and, because of his good services, he was naturalised in France. But Podevils was a Huguenot, and, in consequence of the Edict of Nantes, he left the French Army, and took service under Duke John Frederick of Hanover as Colonel-in-Chief of the Hanoverian Army. When Duke Ernest Augustus succeeded to the Duchy of Hanover, he appointed Podevils successively General, Field-Marshal, President of the Council of War, and Governor of the Royal Palaces of Hanover. Podevils died at Hamburg in 1696, full of years and of honour. The fact that such a man was the true friend of Königsmarck, and thought highly of him, speaks much in Königsmarck's favour.

but, in bidding good-bye, he again took me aside and said: "My dear friend, may God guard thee, but take this advice from me: do not let thy love ever hinder thee from thinking of thy fortune." I replied that contentment had more charms for me than ambition; but he turned away and answered nothing. He left me full of cruel suspicions. Try to find out what it is all about, I implore you. Aurora's letters predict nothing good. Misfortune everywhere; but so long as one holds the loved one, what matters the price?"

*The Princess to Königsmarck.*

"[HANOVER], *Monday*, 13.

"I have this moment received your letter—at last. I hungered for it; I was sick with sadness. Nothing now gives me joy but the token that you remember me: I am sensitive to that—all else is indifferent. *Grand Dieu!* what happiness it would have been if you could have come back! I think I should have died of very joy. But, alas! it was not to be. . . .[1] This is not the only grief Countess Platen will cause me; I believe all my troubles will come through her. What our good friend Marshal Podevils said to you doesn't make me anxious; it concerns me, it is true, but he is an open and honest man, and we have nothing to fear from that quarter. I am indeed grateful that you refused the invitation to join the company at Detmold. It is charming that you should think of me; I pray you continue to do so, and be sure I am not unworthy.

[1] Some lines are missing here.

My one thought is how to please you, and I shall succeed. I am in despair that Aurora has not. . . ."[1]

*Königsmarck to the Princess.*

"In the Country of Teglenburg, [*June*] 8.

"I should feel that I had committed a mortal sin were I to miss a place where the post passes without assuring you of my very humble obedience, though I can tell you of nothing but my love, and how little life has for me when I am away from your sweet self. The farther I am from you, the more I adore you. I fret night and day without finding any comfort. Sometimes I wish the French would be beaten, for then there would be a ray of hope that I should see you again, because the King[2] would not require me; sometimes I wish myself dead, since I have to live without seeing you. In this way am I agitated day and night, without any hope of relief. What will become of me, dear one, should my love drive me to madness? Comfort me in my sad estate, and reassure me that I shall see you again—the most gracious lady in the universe, the most constant, and the most faithful. But I desire a constancy without any reproaches or any coquetry.

"I dined at Monsieur Busche's[3] yesterday; the

[1] The letter is torn off here. Doubtless the Princess is beginning to allude to Aurora's intrigue with Count Bielke, mentioned in Königsmarck's letter.

[2] King William III. of England, commanding the allied armies.

[3] This Busche must not be confounded with Busche who married Catherine Meissenberg (sister of Countess Platen), sometime the mistress of Prince George Louis. That Busche died in 1688, and, as we have seen, his widow subsequently married General Weyke. The Busche above mentioned was a kinsman. He was subsequently

company was not very choice—only some flighty people, so lively that they disgusted me in my sad mood. Madame, his wife, dined with us. She is the best woman in the world. I don't know if you are well acquainted with her ; she is extremely thin, her age is fifty, but she is very witty, and her conversation pleased me the more because it ran mainly on morality and devotion. I certainly go in for the latter. I pray always that my passion may not become fatal to me, and God may keep you constant and make you an example to all your sex. I commend you to the Divine protection to keep you straight, so that I may never be tortured by thinking you behave badly. I hope to receive some of your letters from Wesel."

*The Princess to Königsmarck.*

"[HANOVER], *Monday*, 20.

" At my awakening they gave me your letter. I found it charming, loving, and all I would have it to be. Continue to feel as you write, for if you change I will not live. When I think each step you take removes you farther from me, I despair. Thousands of times I have thought of following you. What would I not sacrifice to be always with you ! Alas ! I should be too happy ; there is no such perfect joy in this

president of the court which divorced the Princess Sophie Dorothea from the Electoral Prince.

A little later we find Colt also writing: "They have sent Monsieur Busche, one of their privy councillors, to the Elector of Brandenburg, to press him to a speedy compliance with his former promise."—Colt's *Despatches*, Hanover, June 26, 1692.

world. I avoid all men, and speak only to women: pray do not thank me for this, for I am pleased to do it. I never leave my chamber. I start to-morrow,[1] and go this evening to bid farewell to the Duchess. Prince Ernest is going to visit the Electress of Brandenburg, and perhaps they will return together.

"If I were to tell you all I feel and how vast is my love, I should never end; it is beyond all I can find words to tell, and I should count myself happy indeed were your love to equal mine. I will not preach to you to be faithful to me, it would be unavailing; but I shall die if you are not. I have told you thousands of times that all the peace of my life depends on your fidelity. You may find others more lovable, but never one so loving; your slightest wish will be always law to me. But why should you change? You are loved to idolatry—your heart is sound. Farewell, *cher enfant*. You will be for ever loved."

The next day the Princess left Hanover for Brockhausen on a visit to her parents. Colt mentions in his despatch of June 17 the fact that the Duke of Celle was staying at Brockhausen, thus corroborating the Princess's letters, which are written from there after the 20th.

"Brockhausen, [undated].

"The only joy left me now is assuring you of my unalterable devotion: my love grows daily. I am glad to be in this quiet place, for it gives me more

[1] For Brockhausen.

time to think of you : my mind is full of you only. My father and mother often speak to me, but I don't hear them, for my heart and my thoughts are far away —with you. I have not had a moment's happiness since you left ; and when I think it will be four or five months before we can meet again, I fall into a melancholy I cannot hide. Sad forebodings crowd in upon me ; I fear they will separate us for ever, or put obstacles in the way of our happiness. I see myself on the edge of a precipice (as indeed I am). If you saw my sad state you would pity me.

"You may be easy about my conduct ; nothing on that account need ruffle your quiet or trouble your rest. To-day, for instance, scarcely was I dressed than I had to dine. Afterwards I went to see my mother for a little while, and then she sent me home.[1] Max[2] escorted me. I left him in the ante-chamber ; I did not stop a moment. He is more stupid than ever ; he was quite confused. My father came to see me and showed me many attentions. I played with Chauvet.[3] We supped, and then I retired, without

[1] The Duke of Celle's hunting-box at Brockhausen was very small, and, as the accommodation was insufficient, the Princess and her suite were lodged in a house hard by.

[2] Prince Max was staying with the Duke of Celle for a time, who was trying to talk him to reason (*vide* Colt's despatches). The Princess's estimate of Prince Max's character agreed in the main with that of Colt, who, speaking of his share in the Moltke plot, says: "Nor indeed was his [Prince Max's] own capacity very fit for it, though he is a very worthy gentleman, and much improved since he hath been at home these two years, having before lost his time by being too much delighted with the pleasures of Venice, where he had been in service five years."

[3] Marshal Jeremiah Chauvet was one of the Frenchmen whom

staying to talk to any one. Good-night; I must to bed. Alas! what sad nights since you left me! When I think of the joys we shared together and my loneliness now, a great pang goes through me. Be true, dear one,—all the happiness of my life hangs on it. I live only for you."

"Brockhausen, $\frac{June\ 25.}{July\ 5.}$

"I had hoped to have had news of you from Wesel, and am much cast down because none came. I attribute it to the carelessness of your servants at Hanover, for I scarcely think you would neglect me: at least, let me flatter myself to that extent; it is the only consolation I have left. When I think you love me I forget all the disasters which threaten—but I shall worry you with my fears. My father and mother overwhelm me with kindness, and, most reassuring, they have not mentioned your name since I came here. I am rather surprised at this, but I hope they are satisfied with what I told them before.

"I heard yesterday of the death of La Court's[1] brother. It was a shock, for I thought of you. Like you, he was young, he was well, yet now he is dead. You cannot imagine my sad reflections: I fear for you more than ever. If you truly love me, be careful of yourself for my sake; for if anything happened to you, what would become of me? I

the Duchess Eléonore brought in her train to the Court of Celle. He was not of noble birth, but the son of a blacksmith in Lorraine. In 1670 the Duke of Celle advanced him to the rank of colonel, and he became successively major-general, general, and field-marshal.

[1] Probably some Court lady at Hanover.

would not stay a moment in this world; life would be impossible. As it is, since you went away, I lead only a lingering life; but I look forward to seeing you again, and that hope brings consolation. What would be left if I lost it? But I will not fret myself with these sad thoughts; all my prayers and desires are for your safety. Day and night, night and day, the good God is troubled with the prayers I offer Him for you. If you but knew how intense is my love you would pity me; it increases every moment, absence does not lessen it. Without change or swerving I love you, and everything that touches you, so tenderly, so perfectly, so *delicately*, that imagination fails to tell.

"I take a positive delight in avoiding persons. My parents and Bernstorff are pleased. They think I shun every one because I wish to be with them; they little know it is because of you—that I may show you my devotion and my love. They talk of going to Wiesbaden. My mother wishes it, as her health is very indifferent, and my father thinks of going too, and they want me to go with them. Let me know if you approve. If you do not, they will find it difficult to make me go; but as long as I please you the rest counts for nothing."

*Königsmarck to the Princess.*

"DULMEN, *June* $\frac{14.}{24.}$

"This is the first place since my last letter where I have found a post, and I take good care not to let it go without writing these lines to assure you of my love and tenderness. The only thing which makes me uneasy

is a tale I have heard from the Baron von Brandenburg, whom you have seen at Hanover. I am also very miserable at not being able to get your letters until I reach Wesel. You had some by every post from me. Is it fair, for you are more certain about me than I am of you? Now let me tell you the story of the Baron von Brandenburg.[1] . . . I am this moment sending a courier to Wesel to fetch your letters. It is six leagues from here. I hope I may receive them to-morrow morning."

"Borguem *on the* 16*th* [*June*].

"My courier has brought me a packet of letters without any from you; it is incredible. The post goes by again to-morrow, and if I get none it will nearly kill me. I hope my correspondent has sent them to Antwerp. I have written to the Widow Goodsblut; but if it turn out that she has none either, I shall die of grief. Have you forgotten the man who worships you in the space of a fortnight? I shall wait eight days, and then, if I hear nothing, I shall know you love me no longer, and I will hasten to the grand army (as soon as I know from Antwerp) and seek a glorious death. Then you can boast that your unfaithfulness has killed me. But first tell the world the promises you vowed to me, and let that theatre judge if I were wrong in seeking death. Can it be that God has made such a charming woman with so little fidelity? I am like a man on whom

[1] Here follows a long story about the said Baron, who loved a Prussian lady of high rank and great beauty, who proved unfaithful to him.

sentence of death has been passed and who is waiting for the hour of his execution. I hardly feel as if I were alive. My mind is so troubled that I can scarcely finish this page. Farewell, perhaps for ever!

"I am three leagues from Wesel. The post goes by again without any letter from you. Cruel one! is it possible that you have such a traitor's heart, and forget me so soon?"

*The Princess to Königsmarck.*

"Brockhausen, $\frac{June\ 27.}{July\ 7.}$

"I do not deserve your reproaches; I shall never deserve them. I cannot imagine why you accuse me of negligence, for even if you do not receive my letters you ought to know me well enough not to lay the blame on me. The fault is not mine, I assure you. Is it possible you mean all you say? You occupy my heart solely and entirely; all the rest is of so little account that I do not give it a thought. I have written with all possible regularity; if I could have written oftener I would have done so gladly, for my only pleasure is to make you remember me and assure you of my love and faithfulness. But this place [Brockhausen] is so far from every means of communication that it greatly delays the joy of receiving your letters, and the same reason, I fear, may lead to your receiving mine very irregularly; besides, the floods are so great that the couriers cannot pass, and so they are obliged to remain here all the week. I spend the whole day with my mother, who talks to me of the danger of abandoning one's self

to one's *penchant*. I say 'Amen' to it all, and so get on well with her, and all of them.

"I have a thousand fears about you. Chauvet told me yesterday that according to all appearances there might be a battle to-day. You know how I love you. Imagine, then, my state of mind when I think that the only being I care for in the world, for whom only I live, is exposed to thousands of dangers. If you love me, take care of yourself; I should die if any accident were to happen to you. I am leading the saddest life imaginable. The more change I have the more I find that cure is useless, for everywhere I carry my love and my sorrow. The burden is no easier for me in this peaceful place. I see no end to my worries, and the time I have to get through without you seems an eternity. But what joy when I see you again! It will be impossible for me to moderate my transports; I fear everybody will see how much I love you. It matters little, for you are worthy, and I never can love you enough."

*Königsmarck to the Princess.*

"VENLO, *July* $\frac{1}{11}$, 1692.

"It is true, then, that you have forgotten me, and the pleasures of the comedy, the music, and, what is worse, the foreigners,[1] are the cause of your forget-

[1] They were probably special envoys, who had come to Hanover on business connected with the campaign against the Turks in the Morea, the intrigues concerning the Electorate, and other matters. Colt mentions that a Baron Eck came to the Court of Hanover in June from the Elector of Saxony, and also a Baron Hasfelt "on his way to France."

fulness? I know it from Monsieur le Prince,[1] with whom I dined to-day. I suppose this is the way to love; but I, alas! cannot. I have neglected everything since I left you; I have even forgotten to shave, and I went all unkempt to the Court quarter of the camp. Everybody stared. Even the Prince asked me what was the matter, for he found me so haggard and worn. I pretended that I had the colic; he little knew the truth. Until now I only feared that you had forgotten me; but since I know that the Piedmontese Count and the Austrian have arrived, I no longer doubt your inconstancy. Cruel one! I know my rivals. Yes, I know them, and that is sufficient. But you have to deal with a man who loves you to distraction, and you made me believe you loved me in the same way. I have neglected fortune, happiness, everything for you, and you treat me like this! It is abominable. I will avenge myself and die. Yes, I will avenge myself in such a way that the whole world will ring with my wrongs. You wished to remain in your chamber to bewail my departure. Your chamber became the opera house, your weeping came from laughing overmuch, and your consolation, instead of reading my letters, as you told me, was in hearing sweet things from others. It is too much. I can bear no more. You drive me to extremities. I will join the Elector of Bavaria's service, and then seek those who have stolen from me your ungrateful heart."

[1] Prince George Louis, who had now joined the troops.

"VENLO, $\frac{\text{I.}}{\text{II.}}$

"I am sighing and trembling while I write this to you. I have no idea how I stand with you, for I have received only one of your letters. I am cursing my bad luck, but, alas! that does not give me comfort in my misery.[1] . . . No, by Heaven! I will not lose you! I will move heaven and earth before I give you up. Were you to change yourself into Jupiter I would not fear the thunderbolt, but would try to avenge myself on my rivals. I could not get leave to go to the grand army, so I must wait until our troops march. It is annoying; but I bear all with patience.

"My sister would like to know if the Court is going in the autumn to some baths, as she would greatly like to go and pay her respects to Madame la Princesse. La Confidente says nothing about the unfaithfulness of her good mistress, but that is only natural, for if I cannot trust you, neither can I trust the people about you. But you know well that God will punish you; there is nothing so certain as that. Take heed therefore and beware."

*The Princess to Königsmarck.*

"BROCKHAUSEN, $\frac{\textit{June}\ 30.}{\textit{July}\ 10.}$

"Two of your letters reached me to-day, but instead of finding them full of love, I found reproaches which I do not deserve nor shall ever deserve. I cannot tell you my surprise at the tone of your letters. I

[1] Here follow pages of reproaches and upbraidings.

have done absolutely nothing since you left. I shall never do anything all my life except what will be agreeable to you, for my one desire is to make manifest the love I bear you. My constancy is without flaw, and I am far from being the coquette you so unjustly call me. I could not help bursting into tears when I read all the hard things you wrote. What right or cause have I given you to have such a bad opinion of me? Is it because I love you to adoration, because I neglect all the friends I have in the world, because I have not heeded the lectures and preachments of my parents, nor thought of all the misfortunes that may come upon me through this? I cannot express to you my grief. You hint at my pleasing people who may supplant you in my affections; they assuredly do not deserve the honour you do them, and I am ashamed to have to excuse myself on their account. I spoke very little to the Piedmontese Count, and not a word to the Austrian. I wrote to you very precisely about everything I have done and everything I am prepared to do for you. I have sworn all the vows you wished, to convince you thoroughly of my good faith. Nothing will make me change. I love you far above what I can tell you, even when you give me cause to repent. Yet you will attach yourself to the Elector of Bavaria, you will forsake me, and all for a suspicion that has not the least appearance of reason! Is this loving? Do you love me still, or are you only seeking a pretext to leave me? If you still have doubts it will be very easy for me to clear them away, for I have taken no step

nor done anything whereof my conscience is afraid. I will gladly swear thousands of dreadful oaths to you on my innocence. I shall have no peace until I know how I stand with you. If the tenderest love and the most inviolable faithfulness will satisfy you, you may be satisfied, for no love was ever so sincere as the love I bear for you."

*Königsmarck to the Princess.*

"Four Leagues from Venlo, $\frac{5}{15}$.

"The lieutenant who went to the Court quarter of the camp brought me a large bundle of letters. I was in highest joy, thinking surely I should find some from you; but I was deceived, for I found nothing except letters from Prince Ernest and from Marshal Podevils. Every one is writing but you. I have reproached you so much that I will say no more except that you have been dancing at Colt's *fête*.[1] I will, however, wait for your letters from Antwerp, which I hope will clear up everything. But you cannot excuse your behaviour at Hanover, especially when the foreigners were there; and whatever the Duke might have wished you to do, you ought not to have consented. This will be the very last letter I shall write to you if I hear nothing from you."

*The Princess to Königsmarck.*

"Brockhausen, [undated] (?*July* 2).

"I suffer agony, and can no longer bear the pain your unjust suspicions cause me. You told me

[1] Colt's *fête* was given on Sunday, June 18.

yourself to write only once to Wesel, and all my other letters have gone to Antwerp. You ought, however, to have received some of them. I know not to whom to attribute this carelessness, but you are greatly in the wrong if you believe that I have forgotten you. Time will prove my innocence and your injustice. I am hurt to the quick, for since your departure my only thought has been how best to show you my fidelity. I am grieved that you are displeased because I went to Monsieur Colt's *fête*, but I could not avoid going, they pressed me so much. The foreigners did not detain me at Hanover; they left a few days before I came to Brockhausen; I have already told you I did not talk to them. I am incapable of deceiving you, even in thought; I love you too passionately. Yet you believe I betray you. You will not write to me. You plunge me in despair. How do I know? What if some one has held back my letters to make us quarrel? I have thousands of evil forebodings and many fears, but you cap them all and overwhelm me with grief by believing me guilty. Ought it even to enter your mind that I should fail in the love I bear you? I would rather fail to myself, for you are a thousand times dearer to me.

"Unfortunately the floods still detain us here.[1] I am grieved because of my letters. We may be here for a week, perhaps."

"Brockhausen, *July* 7.

"We start to-morrow for Celle, where I hope to

[1] "The extraordinary floods have kept the Duke from Celle."—Colt's *Despatches*, July 4, 1692.

find some letters from you; I am in sore need of them to deliver me from this anxiety. I have not a moment of peace. I am trembling for fear we are betrayed; but what I fear most of all is your violent temper, which will not let you reflect in the least, nor give a thought without at once believing me guilty. This suspense is driving me to despair. To-morrow I shall know what to expect. If I find nothing I am lost. Good-bye."

## CHAPTER XV

### *DOUBTS AND FEARS*

Ah, Love, but a day,
And the world has changed!
The sun's away
And the bird estranged.
BROWNING, *James Lee's Wife.*

THE floods having abated, the Court of Celle left Brockhausen and returned to Celle. The Princess accompanied her parents and continued to stay with them. She feared at one time she might have to join the Hanoverian Court at Luisburg; but instead she remained at Celle, and made preparations for a long visit to Wiesbaden with her mother. On arriving at Celle she writes to Königsmarck:

"CELLE, *July* 9.

"I was burning with impatience to get here,[1] for I hoped to find your letters. Alas! there were none, and I spent a night of tears. Again I hoped to receive one this morning. My hope was vain, and for the last eight days, ever since you wrote me that cruel letter, I fear that we are betrayed. I am

[1] "The Duke, since his return hither . . . . ."—Colt's *Despatches*, Celle, July 11, 1692.

trembling on the edge of a precipice, but my own danger is the least of my anxieties. I scarcely think of the misfortunes, inevitable and unavoidable, which surely await me if discovered : you, only, occupy my thoughts. More than death or disgrace I fear that you may leave me ; if you do, there is no more happiness for me. You are all my life, and if I lose you, nothing in the world will console me. I shall not have a moment of peace until my fears are set at rest.

"I received a letter from your sister[1] this morning saying that you had written her a violent letter about me, and she had a good mind to send it on. I wish she had ; at least, I should have seen what you thought of me. She tells me also that if my parents go to the baths at Aix, she will go there with her sister.[2] At present they speak only of Ems or Wiesbaden, but it amounts to the same thing. I have already asked whether you approve of my going on that journey. Le Satyre[3] is here. He tells me that a little while before the discreet Prince's departure, some woman asked His Highness whether he did not wish to fight you because you got on so well with me, whereas he seemed to be on bad terms with me for a long time past. It is not difficult to guess who asked this question![4] I have a continual palpitation of the heart, which I attribute to my anxiety the last few days. You make me suffer, but I suffer gladly for your dear sake."

[1] Aurora von Königsmarck.
[2] Countess von Lewenhaupt.
[3] Some Hanoverian courtier.
[4] (?) The Countess Platen.

"CELLE, *July* $\frac{15}{25}$.

"I shall know my fate to-morrow; I am waiting for it with such anxiety that I cannot sleep. I feel sure that if you had received my letters you would not have missed two posts without a line, unless indeed you take pleasure in bringing me to despair. Everything tends to confirm my fears that we are betrayed. If Countess Platen begins to meddle you may imagine what there is to dread, but I tremble most at your own violence. You say you will enlist in some other service, and I shall see you no more. The thing may already be done for aught I know. I am terribly depressed; it may be a foreboding of misfortunes to come. All I can say is, that if it costs you so little to give me up, you have a very feeble love after all. When the heart is deeply touched one does not give up the loved one so easily; at least, one takes the trouble to examine thoroughly the charges against her. But I cannot expect you to have the patience to do that; I know your ways too well. At the first hint you will break away altogether: perhaps, later, thoughts and reflections will follow; but it will be too late then, and I shall have the grief of loving you to adoration, and knowing all the while that you have never truly loved me. The thought is so maddening that it nearly turns my brain. Farewell. You will be the cause of all my misery in the same way as you have been the source of all my happiness; but I love you—*Mon Dieu!* how I love you!"

THE PRINCESS SOPHIE DOROTHEA. [*To face p.* 276.

*From a Painting at Ahlden, now removed.*

*Königsmarck to the Princess.*

"Near Dist, *July* $\frac{5}{15}$.

"At last I have been so happy as to receive two of your letters, and as one is dated Monday, the 13th, and the other the 16th, I don't think there are any missing. But you tell me in one that you spoke in the preceding letter of the foreigners at Hanover. I have not seen that yet. The last came from Antwerp, on which was all my hope. I received them in a packet—two letters, as I notify above; but what makes me uneasy is that they have been sealed with a wafer and not with your usual seal. I beg you tell me the reason, for it makes me most anxious. A funny thing has happened. I wrote to Prince Ernest joking about many ladies of our Court; I also spoke about Madame la Princesse, but in such terms as respect commands. I sent the letters to the commissary, to forward to Hanover. A certain adjutant happened to see the man carrying the letters, looked at the top of them, and as he found one addressed to 'Monsieur le Prince' he looked no farther, but took the whole bundle to our general,[1] who, without looking at the superscription, opened it, but seeing it was written in terms of great friendship, he only read, he says, the beginning, and sent it back to me, sealed by Lenner, who swore to me that the Prince did not read it all through. The harm would not have been very great, except that I spoke of La Platen

[1] Prince George Louis, commanding the Hanoverian troops.

and Schwartzen and La Schulenburg[1] a little lightly. Your story about those two made me laugh as much as my sadness would allow,[2] but I cannot forget the stay you made at Hanover when the foreigners were there. At any other time I should have forgiven you, but as it is I know not what to say.

"The day before yesterday I had a long conversation with my colonel's wife in the Capuchins' garden, where I was taking a solitary walk. She came up with her husband and several officers, and took upon herself to chaff me about my beard. Then she went on to say she pitied me because I was so unlucky, and another man was more successful. I pressed her to tell me whom she thought I loved. She would not tell me positively, but she let me know enough to be sure she meant you. I urged her to tell me the name of the happy man ; I did not want to know the name of the lady, only the cavalier, but she refused. I begged of her to tell me where she got her information. She said nothing definite, but enough to make me guess she got it from Madohr. You cannot think what an impression it has made on my mind. I tell you frankly that unless you cure me of my new and just suspicions I shall never return to you. It will be hard for me ; I shall not be able to survive it. But it is better to die than to live without being loved. . . . In finishing my letter I took up yours again to look for a little comfort. I found some ; but as you only give me an account of

[1] Ermengarda Melusina von Schulenburg, afterwards Duchess of Kendal, mistress of the Prince of Hanover.

[2] This must refer to something in a missing letter.

the 13th, and as the Prince went on the 6th,[1] I want to know what you were doing the other days. Apparently the foreigners were at Hanover, for the Duchess took you to the comedy on the 13th, a sure sign that the foreigners were there, otherwise the comedy would not have been played. On the 15th the little man[2] went. You kept your room, but not on the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th. What was the day of the *fête*?[3] There were three days you might have kept indoors, for the Prince's departure was a good pretext; but the desire to be seen by the foreigners made you forget all your promises. You cared nothing about the Prince's departure nor for mine; both must have been very welcome to you. . . . You tell me in your letter, 'let us love one another for ever.' Did you really think about what you were writing? At that very time I believe your mind was full of pleasing Monsieur le Rittermeister.[4] No doubt he told you that he had come from the depths of Turkey to admire your beauty, of which he had heard the Turks speak when he was a prisoner amongst them. He charmed you, for that sort of flattery is sure to please a woman, and you doubtless believed he was telling you the truth; but he only came to Hanover to pick up a few hundred ducats to set up his ruined equipage again before Grossvardein. I tell you that I cannot

[1] *I.e.* to Brockhausen after the review, which was held on June 6, and, as we have seen, he did not return to Hanover for some days.

[2] "The little man"—the Prince, who set forth for Flanders on the 15th (25th).

[3] Colt's party and the public rejoicings to celebrate the victory of La Hogue.

[4] A nickname for one of the "foreigners."

speak of the man without my blood boiling. I may suspect you wrongly, but appearances are against you. I have suffered torments for weeks from not having received your letters. Your departure from Hanover did not take place when you said; I knew from the first that the foreigners were there. You go to the comedy, the festival, and the music, notwithstanding that you had a good pretext to remain in your rooms; and, above all, I know that you talked with that count. That is the foundation for my suspicions."

*The Princess to Königsmarck.*

"CELLE, *July* $\frac{13.}{23.}$

"This morning I have received a letter from you—at last. I cannot describe my misery and suspense the last twelve days; now nothing can equal my joy. Though you reproach me so bitterly, and though you suspect me, it is so easy to justify myself that I am not in the least anxious. My anxiety is lost in the fact that you are unchanged; and I find charm and tenderness in all you say. I implore you remain in this mood, and rest assured that I would rather die a thousand deaths than do anything to displease you. I appreciate your sensitive tenderness. I can assure you that all the actions of my life will bear witness to the love I have for you. I am surprised that you still write about the foreigners. I wrote to you every day everything I did—I forgot no detail; but you mix up my narrative so much that I must endeavour to make clear all the points which puzzle you, and again relate

everything. The Prince went to Brockhausen after the review. He returned to Hanover the Friday following. On Saturday he and the Duke paid me a visit according to custom, and the same day the Count who vexes you so much put in an appearance. It is true I played in the evening, but I only spoke to him at the dinner-table, and that very little. The next day was Sunday. After dinner there was music. I appeared rather late. I played cards, as usual, and I spoke a few words to the Count as he was looking on at the game. On Monday the Prince and the Duke went back.[1] The Duke was to have come for the comedy, but the Duchess came alone to it, and afterwards she went back. I am ready to make any vow you like that I had not the least flirtation with the Count, nor had I the wish or thought to talk to him. The day he took his leave I was passing through the ante-chamber of the Duchess's apartments, but I did not pause a moment; I went home directly. He went away the next day (Tuesday). On Wednesday I did not leave my chamber, as the Prince left. I did not appear either on Thursday or Friday. I saw no one for four days except my women. On the Saturday, when the Prince and the Duke came, I had to show myself; and on Sunday was the festival of which I have told you so much already that I have no more to say. On Monday I took leave of the Duchess. On Tuesday I went home.[2] I am glad

[1] Perhaps to Herrenhausen.

[2] *I.e.* went to her parents at Brockhausen. It is noteworthy that Hanover is not "home" to her.

my memory is better than yours, for, were it to fail, you are just the man to pick a quarrel about nothing. I should have a rough time of it; but carping as you are, I defy you to find fault with my conduct, for it is irreproachable, and my love passes words. You must surely see from all I have just told you that it was not for the Count's *beaux yeux* I lingered [at Hanover]. I am ashamed to be compelled to justify myself concerning him. Neither he nor any man in the world could make me take any step displeasing to you. I know, alas! your sensitiveness on these matters. Your suspicions and accusations of coquetry drive me to despair. I have renounced such arts for ever, and in giving myself to you, I think only how best to please you: all my wishes are bounded there.

"It is hard to excuse you for your injustice, except on the ground of the silly things your colonel's wife told you. Have I made any impression on your mind? You remember, I told you a thousand times that my enemies would spare no effort to part us, and begged you urgently not to listen to their tales. However, ask the woman to give you the name of the cavalier, so that I may see how far her audacity goes. Were I at Hanover people might tell me the same things about you, but I should not so readily believe them, for I trust you, and your promises. Believe me, my heart is safe in your keeping. When you think of your merits and of my love you ought to have no uneasiness; I belong so truly to you that death alone can part us. The last twelve days I have

known, alas! the extent of my tenderness too well to believe any one ever loved so strongly as I love you. I had no doubt that I was betrayed, and the Countess Platen had meddled; but though I was in danger of being lost for ever, I vow I never even thought about it, for you alone made me anxious. I feared to lose you; I trembled lest on the impulse of the moment you would enlist in the service of the Elector of Bavaria, and I should see you no more! But I am far different to-day: my joy is now so great that I cannot hide it. Why am I so far from you? What joy to be with you, to prove by my caresses how I love and worship you. In God's name, believe me, and put away anything which might make you doubt. Above all, do not heed the silly tales you may hear. We have any number of people to fear; therefore let us be on our guard. Be unto me as I am to you. If you remember, you once said you would give up war and live for me alone, but I fear you have already forgotten it. If my blood were wanted to ransom you from danger I would give it gladly, for I cannot exist without seeing you. I lead a lingering life. I have not really *lived* a moment since you left; only your dear letters give me a gleam of gladness. I think of all the joys we had together, and then on my weariness and loneliness to-day. What a difference! When will that delightful time return?

"The siege of Namur[1] makes me tremble. Take

[1] Namur was besieged throughout the first weeks of June. The citadel fell about June 21.

care of yourself, and remember that my life is linked with yours. Ah! my dear one, why am I not with you in the battle? I would gladly die by your side. Once more, good-bye. My love is inexhaustible; I belong to you a thousand times more than to myself."

"[Celle], *July* $\frac{16.}{26.}$

"I expected to have a letter from you on my awakening, but instead of the delight of news from you I had only the tedium of a letter from my husband. I know not if you are to blame for this negligence. If all you wrote in your last letter be true I ought not to be uneasy, but I can never be sure. If, unluckily, some malicious person has told you some silly story I must not, of course, expect to hear for a long time. If you knew the grief I suffer when the post goes by without bringing a letter from your dear hand, you would be more punctual in writing, for my only joy is in seeing these tokens of your remembrance. I wrote to you yesterday, and indeed every day. Not a day goes by that I do not write, and as long as I am here I shall send four times a week. It is a great pleasure to me, and I take good care not to fail. I am getting on admirably with my parents; I duly pay my court to them, and they have never shown me more kindness. I shall be here a long time; I am glad of it, and I believe you will be glad too, for at this Court there is no one. I prefer solitude now to all the pleasures in the world. I am inconsolable because I have not received a letter

from you. Patience until Wednesday! The suspense is enough to kill me. Write so that I may receive your letters regularly, for I cannot go on living in this way. You say that you have made a vow no man has ever made before. I am dying to know what it is; but I am sure, whatever it may be, it does not equal the resolution I have made—to henceforth avoid all men, to show nothing but distant politeness to everybody, to make every effort to please you, to scorn all misfortunes that may befall, and to link my life with yours. This is my resolve; are you satisfied with it?

"I got into bed when I had finished this and was reading your dear letters. I thought myself safe because I had given out that I was asleep; but to my surprise my mother came to wish me good-night a second time. All La Confidente could do was to hide the letters under the quilt. I scarcely dared move for fear the paper might rustle; but at last my mother went away, to my great relief, for I was terribly afraid. I dislike all these surprises, but it is impossible to avoid them."

"Celle, *July* $\frac{18.}{28.}$

"I cannot employ my time better than in writing to you; it gives me such delight that I could spend whole days at it, though nothing happens here except the same smooth, uneventful round. But my love is inexhaustible, and of itself would give me enough to entertain you; though to tell you the truth I am sad at having received no news of you. I fear you have found some more agreeable occupation than thinking

of me. I do all I can to drive away such thoughts, but I love you too fervently to be easy, and you are altogether too fascinating for women to leave you alone. They will do their best to estrange you from me. Resist their allurements, I implore you, and come back to me as tender as when we parted. The memory of all that has taken place between us forms my only joy now ; indeed, I wish for no other while you are absent.

"They say the Electress of Brandenburg is at Luisburg.[1] If so I shall be unable to avoid going there. I am much vexed about it, for I shall have to be always with her, when my only pleasure is to be alone, thinking of you. I am dying to see you with your beard. I would give my blood to be two hours with you. But, dear God ! I must not think of it ; that is what distresses me. Never leave me again, but let us look forward to that happy future when we shall be parted no more. I would rather brave everything than live without you. Oh, my love, my love ! all the misfortunes of the world, all the blame, all the shame, are not half so dreadful to contemplate as separation from you ! "

"CELLE, *July* $\frac{20.}{30.}$

"I do not know what construction to put upon your silence ; I cannot imagine the reason. To-day I have received another letter from the Prince : I am

[1] "Moltke was executed on Monday, and the Court has gone to Luisburg to be out of the way."—Colt's *Despatches*, Hanover, July 18, 1692. The Electress changed her mind.

piqued to notice that he is more regular in writing than you. What has become of your eagerness? Does the Brussels air inspire you with coldness? Has a new passion entirely effaced me from your memory? I cannot reassure myself. You have no good excuse for your neglect, for while you are with the army you can write at any moment, but you do not. Had you not received any of my letters, and had I not received any of yours, I might think that knavish tricks are being played ; but as that is not so, I cannot delude myself any longer. I have written to you so regularly that you must surely see my only pleasure lies in assuring you of my love and fidelity. You reply so irregularly that I fear I weary you ; pray don't force yourself to write to me unless you can do so with a good heart. No doubt you have pleasanter occupations, and I would not be so unkind as to take you away from them. I wish your inclination to govern all your actions, but I cannot suit myself to everything you do for the mere sake of decorum. I confess I am piqued, very much so, at your indifference. I try to excuse you as much as possible, but I cannot find any solution of the riddle. I have never been wounded so sensibly before. But, believe me, however much I have reason to be dissatisfied, however much I may become indifferent to you, I will not fail in anything I have promised. Pray let me know if you consent to my going to Wiesbaden. The journey is almost decided. My mother wishes it extremely, and she is writing to-morrow to the Prince to ask his permission for me to

go. I entreat you, write as soon as you possibly can. What you wish shall be done. Farewell.

"I wanted to finish thus, but I have not the strength. I take up my pen again to beg you to come back to me. Without you I cannot live; I will expose myself to everything rather than lose you. See how low you bring me! I am forced to believe you guilty, however much I wish to think you innocent. Yet I write thus."

"CELLE, $\frac{July\ 22.}{August\ 1.}$

"It is very hard to be angry when one loves so tenderly. All my anger is gone, and I delude myself with the hope that it is your servants' neglect, and not yours, that prevents me from receiving your letters. If I do not get any to-morrow I think I shall go mad; it will be the third post. If you knew my anxiety you would pity me. I fear no end of things, but most of all that you have forgotten me and some new passion engages you wholly: that thought torments me always. I tremble lest you be unfaithful. Who could be trusted if you deceive me? If you do so I shall renounce the whole world, and retire to some lonely spot where I can weep over my loss. I want to know if you approve of the journey I have already asked you about. My mother yesterday wrote so urgently to the Prince that he will be unable to refuse his permission. If he gives me leave, and you refuse it I shall be greatly perplexed. There is, however, no reason why you should withhold permission, for there will be no one at Wiesbaden, and those who

escort us on the journey are of no consequence : these are the two essential points for you to consider, if you love me still. I assure you I have not thought of enjoying myself there, nor of seeing many people. In my present mood society is the last thing I desire : solitude suits me better than pleasure. My impatience to see you surpasses all that I can express ; and if I do not find you the same on your return, what will become of me ? You alone have brought joy into my life ; you know that I have counted all else as naught, and all my desires are limited to pleasing you, to have you all mine. If I do not succeed, life will have nothing left for me ; you alone make me love it—you will make me hate it. Farewell."

"CELLE, *July* 25. / *August* 4.

"This is the third post, and still no letter ! Surely so tender a lover as you always seemed to be cannot have wholly forgotten me—or are we betrayed ? It positively must be one thing or the other. The suspense is so acute that I have not a moment's peace. But my great fear is that you have changed. I think of nothing else, nor of all that may happen to me. Is it possible that you have forgotten your vows of eternal fidelity ? I strive to drive away my sad thoughts, but I am in such abject melancholy that I fear it is a foreboding of misfortune. If you love me no longer I shall never be comforted. But what is the use of telling you that ? You know it, and perhaps the knowledge has not prevented you from becoming unfaithful. Why do you force me

by your silence to believe the worst? I have not deserved this coldness, for none ever loved so tenderly before. If I receive no letter from you by the next post I shall no longer be able to doubt. What pleasure can you find in grieving me thus? What have I done to be treated in this way? Is it because I love you to madness and am faithful to you with a faithfulness that nothing will ever equal? I have not the strength to say more, for I am writing perchance to an ungrateful being, and the thought is death. Farewell. If no letters come by the first post I shall risk sending a note by Lenner, for if there should be treachery I fear that you have received none of mine. I send you this by the postmaster here."

*Fräulein von Knesebeck to Königsmarck.*

"*Mon Dieu!* what does it mean? Why do the letters miscarry so? I would give much to know the reason. Her Highness fears that you have become unfaithful, and though I keep telling her the contrary, she does not believe me. All my fear runs on treachery. It must be the fault of your servants; you would do well to write and ask them the reason. It appears they forward you all your letters. If the others fare as badly as these it will comfort me, but if you receive them more regularly what can it mean? Why should these letters be so long on the road? Beware, sir. Do not neglect to find out, for the more I think of it the more anxious I become. I think you wrote in one of your letters that you were uneasy about the seal which I put inside the letter, and I

wrote afterwards that I sealed it with that. All this makes me fear that the letters have been opened, and that they have taken away something. You have also written to Her Highness asking what she did after His Highness left. She told you everything, day by day; it cannot have been taken out of the letters. In truth, I know not what to think. I am half inclined to go and see about it myself, and end this anxiety. In the last letter, I wrote to you to send me an answer direct here; I do hope you addressed the letter to me in my own name. If you have not done so let me know, so that I may see to it.

"L. S." [1]

*Königsmarck to the Princess.*

"WAVER, *August* $\frac{14.}{24.}$

"At last I have reached the pinnacle of bliss. I received five of your letters at once, but I see by the last that two are still missing. That distresses me, for I do not know how to recover them, and I would not like to lose any of your dear letters, they comfort me too much. You cannot imagine what joy it gives me to find you are innocent. I humbly beg your pardon for having unjustly suspected you. I am greatly grieved about it, and I hope you will not be disgusted with me altogether, for it is because I love you so much that these fancies come to me. Do not punish me as I deserve; I have been punished enough already by the anguish these wicked suspicions have

[1] *La Sentinelle*—one of the pseudonyms of the Fräulein von Knesebeck.

caused me. I promise you to have no more of them. What can I do to show you my gratitude for the quiet life you are leading? If my eternal love suffices, it is yours; if you desire a life *sans peur et sans reproche*, it is yours also. Night and day, day and night, I only think of how to please you. My love for you passes passion; I will be faithful unto death. What! I suspected you of inconstancy. Ah! base am I! You have shed tears for love of me. Oh! dear heart, do not pain those lovely eyes; I am not worthy. What distresses me most is to find that you are more reasonable than I, for you tell me you have not received my letters, and you attribute this to the neglect of my servants at Hanover. You are right, for this is the eighth I have written to you, though I had not received any from you. I was inclined at first to think it was your fault, without considering that a hundred accidents might have hindered. This is my defect—my weakness; but, dearest, remember it springs from loving you so much. I am very glad you are going to Wiesbaden. I am so satisfied with your conduct that you might go to Paris without causing me any anxiety. I am glad you are on such good terms with your parents; this time you should take advantage of it, for there are moments we can never recover. . . . I am delighted to hear that you find Prince Max sillier than ever; I hope he will never again salute you. The portrait I have with me is dearly cherished; you need not fear any one seeing it, for I guard it so carefully that I defy the cleverest man in the world to guess where it is. My

pretty heart, you say in one of your letters that perhaps at this very moment I am dividing my heart with others. Yet see how I am all yours! We have been for six days only four leagues from Brussels without my having thought of setting my foot therein. Yesterday there was a great feast in Brussels called the 'Feast of the Miracle,' and Monseigneur l'Electeur[1] and all the great ones and generals of the army went in post-chaises to celebrate it; many fair ladies were there, too. I knew of it soon enough to have gone; but I swear, my dearest, I never thought of going. My soldiers went, and they could not praise it enough, particularly the fair sex. I would not go to Brussels at all if I were not obliged to have a certain bracelet made for me, of which you know, and a copy in miniature of a portrait I shall wear for ever next my heart. My Lord Portland[2] showed me much friendliness, and assured me that the King held me in esteem. All that does not make me wish to better my fortune. No, Beloved, so long as I can count you mine, I wish nothing more; all the favours of kings are useless to me. The King's interview with our Prince was very dull, for both are men of few words. Yesterday the Prince went

[1] Probably the Elector of Bavaria.

[2] Hans William Bentinck, first Earl of Portland and ancestor of the present Duke, accompanied William of Orange to England as confidential adviser, who created him Earl of Portland in 1689. He was in command of a regiment of Dutch Guards at the battle of the Boyne, and probably held the same commission in Flanders. Colt mentions in his despatches that Lord Portland was with King William at Brussels and during the campaign.

to see His Majesty in his camp. I did not go in his suite ; but to-morrow I attend him to the Elector's, and I will give you an account of that. Prince Frederick Augustus of Saxony is the dupe of all ; he is cheated in his horses, and money is won from him at cards ; he has already lost one thousand pistoles. He has no one to advise him, and is being ruined. I heard to-day that Prince Christian is to marry the widow of the Duke d'Arenburg."

"*On the* 15*th.*

"I went yesterday to the grand army. We waited on the Elector of Bavaria, and then we joined the King, who was walking in the camp. There was a great concourse of people of quality, but no very distinguished-looking men. The brave Elector was most gracious to me, and his manner most kind and courteous. We shall soon join the grand army, and then I shall be able to tell you more news. The Prince [of Hanover] is much put about to know how to command his troops ; it is obvious that he is unequal to the task of managing them.

" You ask me to reassure you of my love. I will never forsake you ; so long as a drop of blood remains in my veins, so long as I draw breath, my heart is wholly yours. You are all my wealth, my treasure ; I would sacrifice the world to kiss your divine mouth. I hate war and everything which takes me from your side. One favour only I ask of the gods—that I may be with you always, in life and in death. I beg of you to tell me if my portrait is as much

pleasure to you as yours is to me; I want to see it in writing. Your picture is my only consolation when I am low in spirits, when I think of my sorrow and how far I am from you. It reminds me, too, of the happy moments I spent with my dear one; it makes me exclaim, 'Ah! moments of rapture,' and I thank you again for the very memory of them. Angel! I am thine only, body and soul; my heart is filled with thy charms, mine eyes are blinded with the brightness of thy beauty."

"[*On the 16th.*]

"What joy, what rapture, what delight to be loved by you! I have just received two more of your letters. No, my divinity, I will not exact any oaths from you; I know you well, and will trust you and believe everything you tell me. Your devotion shows me that I am the happiest man in the world. I feel so happy; my only sorrow is that we are separated. The days seem weeks to me, the weeks like months, and the months centuries; and when I think that I have still two months of campaigning to go through before I see you, I despair, and pray a thousand times a day that I may be wounded in the fight, and so have a pretext for returning to Hanover—and to you. I am so despondent that I am wasting away; and what grieves me most is the thought that when you see me again you will find me as ugly as sin. The Elector told me so only to-day, and all my friends find me so pale and careworn they scarcely recognise me. Every day they ask me if I am ill; but my complaint only

comes from loving you. Cruel little one! You think I am so hasty that I would commit some folly on the strength of a mere suspicion; but, dearest, when a man loves as I love, he can never abandon the woman he adores. I loved you through it all, so think no more about it."

*The Princess to Königsmarck.*

"CELLE, $\frac{July\ 28.}{August\ 7.}$

"I, too, ask your pardon for all my unjust suspicions; I would not for worlds have been in the right. I am at a loss for words to express my joy at finding you still so tender; but, indeed, there is a little laziness in you, and it is very good of me to forgive you so easily for the three posts you let pass without writing. Tell me what hindered you; I should like to know. Find me a good excuse, for, really, your neglect rankles in my heart. I am greatly vexed that two of my letters are lost, for if they reflect at all what I am thinking, it will not be difficult to guess that they are written by me. You do not understand what I meant to say about the portrait. I did not mean to speak of mine, for I am sure you will have greater care for all that concerns me than I have myself. It was about yours I was uneasy. You say you are going to have a copy made of it; for whom do you intend that copy? I thank you for giving me leave to go to Wiesbaden; you can do so without any risk, for I so belong to you that you have nothing to fear. All the same, without your consent I would have died rather than have gone, for my only desire is

to please you. The Duke and Duchess [of Hanover] have written to me the kindest, most affectionate, and politest of letters concerning the journey. I do not know if I shall be able to receive your letters as quickly as if I were remaining here; I hope so, for they are my only joy and comfort—the least delay grieves me greatly.

"It was so thoughtful of you not to go to Brussels. However, do not restrain yourself; I have no wish to be *exigeante* so long as you cherish me in your memory. I am too happy, too pleased; but keep your heart whole for me, and do not allow any one to divide it. I am delighted that you are, for once in your life, satisfied with me; were you reasonable you would always be so, for all I do goes to prove my love and devotion. I do not know what you are doing, perhaps very often thinking of me. I dream of you often, and with infinite pleasure, thinking I am with you; then I awake and am inconsolable to find it was only a dream. I cannot delude myself into thinking the vision may soon become a reality, for the Prince writes to me that they are going to raise the siege of Namur. What terrors that news has for me! *Grand Dieu!* I think of you exposed to danger. How can I keep calm when all that I love, all the delight of my life, is in deadly peril? I offer endless prayers for you, keeping a good heart while saying them, trying to believe they will be granted. Farewell."

# CHAPTER XVI

## *THE BATTLE OF STEINKIRK*

I have loved you ; yea, when I rode in war
Your face went floated in among men's helms,
Your voice went through the shriek of slipping swords.
SWINBURNE, *Chastelard.*

"I OFFER endless prayers for you," writes the Princess to her lover. He had need of them, for even while the ink was wet Königsmarck was fighting in one of the fiercest battles of the century. The battle of Steinkirk took place on August 3, 1692. William surprised Luxemburg, and began the attack early in the morning while it was yet dark, and at first it seemed that he would succeed. The French general was off his guard, but with consummate skill he checked the advance of the Allies and called up reinforcements. All day long the battle raged without either side gaining advantage ; the fight was so close and desperate that the muzzles of the muskets crossed. In the forefront of the battle were the British troops, commanded by Count Solmes, an incapable Dutch general. Though faced by overwhelming numbers, they would not yield an inch, and five fine British regiments were cut to pieces. Mackay's division of

Highlanders was simply mown down with sword and bayonet. No wonder that afterwards there arose a great cry in England that English soldiers should henceforth be commanded by English generals. Had it not been for La Hogue, Steinkirk would have cost William of Orange his English crown.

At last, night drawing on, the army of the Allies retired towards Lambeque, leaving the French in possession of the field. The French lost seven thousand men killed and wounded, the Allies not many more ; but the victory was with France. The French rejoicing at this barren victory was only equalled by the disgust of the Allies at their defeat. In the camp at Lambeque all was disunion and discontent ; the sudden withdrawal of Prince Frederick Augustus of Saxony (though Königsmarck puts it down to gambling debts) was due as much to political as personal reasons. The Hanoverian contingent was held in reserve as a possible reinforcement, and took no part in the battle, a forced inaction which must have been very galling to their general, Prince George Louis. Königsmarck obtained leave to go to the fight as a volunteer, and attached himself to the Prince of Würtemburg, "following him everywhere in the battle." The troops sent by the Duke of Celle were in the thick of the fray and suffered great loss.

The disastrous news reached Celle within two days. The little Court was plunged into mourning, and the Princess was in agonies of grief and anxiety lest Königsmarck should be numbered among the slain. In the general lamentation her emotion passed un-

noticed, or was put down to natural uneasiness about her husband. Colt, who was then at Celle, writes: "The disappointment is great here, when by the news they had received last post they were almost confident of a victory, or at least some considerable advantage; but now, by the relation they have had by a courier, they are told that their troops have suffered very much, and many of their officers killed and wounded. Many persons are in great trouble at the loss of their friends."[1]

The Princess soon received tidings of her lover's safety, and with a good heart proceeded to complete her arrangements for the trip to Wiesbaden with her mother. They were interrupted by the unwelcome news that the Electress of Brandenburg was coming to pay the Duke and Duchess of Hanover a visit at Luisburg, and Sophie Dorothea feared that she would have to go there to assist in the festivities. "I dread that more than death," she writes, thus showing how great was her unhappiness at the Hanoverian Court. But her fears were groundless.

Königsmarck's letters continue to be written from the camp at different places, and are alternately full of passionate love and violent reproaches. They are more varied than those of the Princess (which are, indeed, so full of her love as to leave room for little beside), and give us curious glimpses of contemporary manners. Königsmarck was in high favour with King William, the Elector of Bavaria, and many of the princes and generals of the campaign. Undoubtedly

[1] Colt's *Despatches*, Celle, August, 1692.

his prospects were brilliant if he had cared to profit by them; but, like the Princess, he was ready to sacrifice everything to his passion. The period covered by this brief introduction is August and September, and the correspondence opens with the reception of the news of the battle of Steinkirk at Celle.

*The Princess to Königsmarck.*

"[CELLE], $\frac{July\ 29.}{August\ 8.}$

"I learned on my awakening that a fearful battle has taken place and you were in it. Imagine my agitation. It was noticed by every one, for I could not hide my feelings. I am in inconceivable anxiety. I cannot sleep, and shall not until I know you are out of danger. My plight is pitiful: it seems to me that every gun is pointed at you; you must be running terrible risks. *Grand Dieu!* if any hurt were to happen to you, what would become of me? I could not conceal my grief nor be mistress of my emotion; I should start at once for the camp, hasten to give you all necessary care and attention, and never leave you more. My sufferings are intense. I know you have been going through great danger, but know not how you fare. I shudder, tremble, and am overwhelmed with woe. Do not expose me to such fears in the future—leave me no more. If it be true that you love me, spend the rest of your life with me; let us build up a happiness in each other which none can shatter. I have not the heart to write more; I am so beside myself that I hardly know what I am writing. You have caused

me many tears since you went away ; I fear me they will only cease to flow when you come back, for you will be exposed to danger all through the campaign. I hate King William, who is the cause of it all ; he breaks my heart by thus risking all I have in the world. Good-bye. Take care of yourself. Remember my life is fused with yours ; I would not live a moment were you to die."

"[CELLE], $\frac{July\ 30.}{August\ 9.}$

"I am the most unfortunate and unhappy of women. No sooner is my mind at rest about your constancy than I am plunged into terrible fear for your life. I have not closed my eyes all night. I am so downcast and melancholy that every one pities me : indeed, I am to be pitied, for the man who gives my life all its happiness is in danger every moment ; perhaps I shall never see him again. It will kill me ; I cannot endure this suffering. I shall surely not survive you. I implore you, in the name of the love I bear you, expose me not again to such anxiety, but leave me never more. I am weary of suffering so much. It is only right that you should give yourself wholly to me, for I have given myself all to you. My heart is breaking, I shall have no peace until I know that you are safe."

*Königsmarck to the Princess.*

"FROM THE CAMP NEAR WAVERN.

"Here I am again. I have escaped once more. Our troops did not come in for any fighting, but

A STREET IN CELLE.

[*To face p.* 302.

I did, for I volunteered, and was in the most terrible fire. The Prince of Würtemburg got me leave (I followed him everywhere in the battle); but as I was only a volunteer I could not distinguish myself, and that grieves me, for I ran just the same risk as if I had been ordered to the front. The Duke of Celle has lost a great many men.[1] I will not tell you any more about the battle, for you will know enough from other sources. But, dearest, I will tell you that I received, while marching, your letter of the 18th, and after reading it, I put it next my heart and kept it there until I was out of the fight, and I believe it was your dear letter that saved my life. I am grateful indeed for the talisman, and adore you more than ever, since you have rendered me such a service. Until now, dear one, they have not sought to tempt me from you, nor have I even seen a woman; if I had she would have made no impression upon me.

"I must tell you of the precautions I took about your letters on the eve of the battle. I sealed them all, with the portrait, in a packet, and gave them to Daniell, an officer of my regiment, with strict orders to burn them at once if I were killed. But joy! I can still read them, and my eyes will have the pleasure of looking into yours.

"I have heard from Prince Ernest that the Electress [of Brandenburg] is going to Luisburg, and therefore I imagine you will go also; but pray keep to your strict rule of conduct, for you will be sure to find

[1] "This Duke here is really very much troubled for the loss of his troops in the late action."—Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, August 5, 1692.

there some of your old admirers, who will try to win your good graces. The Electress will notice it, and to annoy us both she will try to entangle you in a flirtation with Le Barbouilleur ;[1] but you have been so good that I am sure you will continue in the same path."

"At the Camp of Halle, [undated].

"I have only now received your twelfth letter ; it was given me with three others. You cannot fairly accuse me of having been negligent, and it grieves me that you should imagine the ladies of Brussels might hinder me from paying you due attention. Here are more grievances ; but I forgive you, for of course you were unaware that I had not set foot there, and were it not for the bracelet, I assure I should not think of going at all. Play prevented me from writing the day before yesterday ; and there I am in fault rather, the more so as yesterday I could not write because of the enemy giving an alarm ; otherwise, my dear one, I should never have missed writing. Your letters were a great comfort to me ; they came very *à propros*, for I got them when I came back from the King's tent, where I had lost a thousand pistoles, and, as that is a considerable sum, it was vexing me not a little, but your dear letters made me forget my trouble. Still I found in one of them something which tells me that if I were the man to break my vows you would easily be consoled. You are certainly very complaisant

[1] *Le Barbouilleur*, the dauber, scribbler, babbler. He must have been some one holding high office at the Court of Hanover, but the key to this is lost.

when you say: 'I fear that I weary you. Pray don't force yourself to write to me unless you can do so with a good heart. No doubt you have pleasanter occupations, and I would not be so unkind as to take you away from them.' If I were such a traitor as to change you ought to be grieved, and not beg me to divert myself, and not to restrain myself. But surely you did not mean it. It was anger that made you write thus. It is strange that you should not have received any of my letters. This is the fifth I have written to you from this camp, and I have not missed a post except the two before mentioned. I would scold you much were I not in the same plight as yourself; yet *I* have never prayed you to write to me no more. That shocks me much in your letter, and twenty times at least I have thrown down my pen as I thought of the wrong you do me. But I cannot better pass my time than in writing to you, though it be always in a strain of complaint. I have received a letter to-day from my agent at Antwerp, but without inclosing any from you; that adds to my sadness, for my only comfort is in reading your letters. I have little enough of it, for the whole of your letters I have received since I left Hanover could be read in half an hour. I often find comfort in sitting before your portrait, and if it could speak to you on my return it would tell of the passion with which I gaze on it for hours together, how often it brings tears to my eyes, how often I sigh, 'Ah! *mon Dieu!*' and, 'Oh! what joy for me to die!' I swear, my charming pet, that all day long I speak to

no one ; I only think of you, and often in the night your vision rises before my eyes. . . . If you remain true to me you will no doubt make me turn into a sober citizen of Hanover, for, after all, one only seeks to be happy, and how could I be happier than in possessing you wholly and solely. There is a rumour here that we shall attack Mons ; if that be so, keep the 'Festa.' If you are true to me, pray for me, besiege Heaven with prayers and vows ; but if you are not true, then do not pray for me, for I would rather find my grave there—though, however untrue you might be, I would give much to see you again.

"In a previous letter I told you that there were very few distinguished-looking men in the train of the King or the Elector ; but if I had seen the Duke of Richmond,[1] son of the Duchess of Portsmouth, sooner, I should not have said so, for he is the most charming youth. He unites to perfect manners an air of great distinction ; he is well made, and has a handsome face and fine eyes. I only hope he may not become my rival ; he is such a good-looking boy that if I were not sure of your constancy my chances would be very poor.

"You ask if any woman has tempted me to forget you. I vow that since I left Hanover I have not gone astray. My health is poor, but before I see

[1] Charles Lennox, illegitimate son of King Charles II. by Louise de Querouaille, Duchess of Portsmouth, was created Duke of Richmond in 1675, and is ancestor of the present Duke. He was born in 1672, and would therefore be in his twenty-first year at this time.

you again I hope to be in such perfect condition that you may command me as you will. I go on my knees before your portrait and exclaim, 'I pray your pardon for my wicked suspicions. I see that I greatly wronged you, and am waiting for my sentence; it could not be hard enough for me to deserve.'

"The Prince allowed me to leave my regiment and go to the battle, with an order to come back soon; but as I was in the thick of it I did not return in a hurry. When all was over he said to me, 'You were away a very long time,' but he said it very nicely. I went to dine with him yesterday, and found him as usual."

*The Princess to Königsmarck.*

"[Celle], *August* $\frac{4}{14}$.

"What joy to know that you are out of danger! One must love as I love to feel as I feel. I passed two days and nights in mortal anguish; no one ever suffered so much. And now two of your letters come at the same time. I am overjoyed with them, for you assure me that you are pleased with me and I need fear nothing on the score of your constancy. But I love you so dearly that I needs must scold you for having exposed yourself to unnecessary danger. What have I done that you should treat me so lightly? Ought you not guard yourself for me? I should be grieved were you to risk your honour, but I cannot forgive you for doing rash things like a foolish boy; I entreat and implore you do not commit any more of

such follies. What would become of me were I to lose you? Do you never think that my life is bound up with yours, and I would not live a moment if you were to be killed? I hope the campaign will soon end, for if they are going to attempt anything fresh I shall die of terror lest some hurt befall you. I don't know what the Elector [of Bavaria] could have been about with his eyes to have thought you 'as ugly as sin.' Had he seen you with mine he would have found you the most charming and the handsomest of men. No one can dispute the palm with you, and however many wonderful things you may tell me about the Duke of Richmond, I am sure he must pale in comparison with you. You would have no reason to fear him were he to 'become your rival,' for he would only pave the way for your triumph. Neither he nor any man in the world could please me after you. I could pay you any number of compliments of this sort, but I fear to offend your modesty, so I will stop.

"The Electress of Brandenburg will not come for some time, and I shall be gone before she arrives. Our escort on the journey are not dangerous. You may rest easy: they are only my mother's two pages and Verfuy. When we meet you will find me more faithful and loving than ever; be the same, I implore you. Let me thank you for taking such precautions concerning my letters and portrait; but they were unnecessary, for had you fallen, my grief would have discovered everything. I should not have had the strength to restrain myself; and, indeed, it would have

been immaterial to me whether I was lost or not, for without you life would be intolerable, and imprisonment within four walls pleasanter than to go on living in the world.[1] Thank God, I am now free from such sad thoughts, and I make many prayers not to come again to such straits.

"All the Court to-night complimented me on my cheerfulness. The fools thought the Prince was the cause of it; but, to tell the truth, I have not once thought about him. I cannot tell you the delight I feel because, at last, you are pleased with me. Let it be so always; and the more you know me the more you will love me. The love I bear you will last till death, and all the powers of the universe will never part us. If you could peep into my heart at this moment and behold the confusion you cause there, you would be satisfied. You are fascinating, loving, faithful—what can woman wish for more? My happiness is beyond compare, and I have only one wish left in the world—to see you soon. Would you were with me at this very moment! When once I hold you again I will never let you go. Good-night. It is late. I am fain to end, though I have so many more things to say that my words will never tarry. Be all mine, I implore you. As for me, I live only for you. I am grieved that you are not in good health. I thank you for the care you take of yourself, and, though I am surprised at it, I am grateful, as I ought to be. Goodbye.

"I *cannot* end. I take so much delight in writing

[1] In view of subsequent events this is almost prophetic.

to you that I could spend the whole night at it. La Confidente is going to sleep; I must send her to bed. Love me as I love you. I am too happy for words."

"[CELLE], *August* $\frac{5}{15}$.

"My mother, who has just left me, tells me it is quite true there will be another battle. If I had not been in bed she would have noticed the shock her news gave me; I have not got over it yet. Again I am in mortal terror, and can only write of my sorrow to-day. It is agonising to think of your being perpetually exposed to danger. Am I destined to sorrow all my life? Shall I never be able to taste quietly the joys of loving and being loved? I long for news of you on the morrow. I shall spend a sleepless night.

"My father and mother have just interrupted me. I was writing this letter, and it was all I could do to hide it; it would have astonished them if they had seen it. They are very considerate and kind, but are always preaching to me to behave properly to the Prince. My father will not hear any jokes or ridicule at his expense, and therefore I do not speak to him as much as I should otherwise do. If you only knew how weary I am, you would never have the cruelty to leave me again. But I must not think of this; I must make up my mind to divide your heart with your love of glory. You have all mine. There is no room in it for any one or anything—the desire to please you fills it entirely. I love you far more than you love me. Farewell. It is my desire to become

an example of the tenderest love, the most perfect constancy, that ever existed since the world began.

"*L'Envoi.*—I have just received your letter. I deserve to be scolded, it is true ; but how can I guard my words when I fear losing you, when I love you to madness ? I would rather die over and over again than cease to be loved by you. You are right in thinking it was anger made me write the words that wounded you : I cannot be reasonable when I love so passionately. I will write to you fully to-morrow. I have no time to say more now, as my father is coming to take me to a 'bull-bait,'[1] the same as they have in England. It is not necessary for me to assure you again that I shall never change. If there be any vows left I would sign them with my heart's blood."

*Königsmarck to the Princess.*

"HALLE, *August.*

"I again ask your pardon for all I wrote in haste.

[1] Bull-baiting was a popular pastime in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, patronised by royalty and persons of rank. Queen Elizabeth gave one in honour of the French ambassadors in 1559, and the Queen and the ambassadors greatly enjoyed "the sport," which Hentzer thus describes : "There is a place built in the form of a theatre, which serves for baiting of bulls and bears ; they are fastened behind, and then worried by great English bull-dogs, but not without risque to the dogs from the horns of the one and the teeth of the other, and it sometimes happens they are killed on the spot. Fresh ones are immediately supplied in the places of those that are wounded or tired." This barbarous pastime was also practised as late as the reign of Queen Anne, and was very popular, too, in market towns and rural villages. But these bull-baitings drew such a mob of low and dissipated persons together that they were at last abolished in the interests of the public peace.

I missed the post *twice* (not *three* times, as you say) for good and sufficient reasons. Still, I ought to have left all to acquit myself of my duty to you. My dear, I own my fault, so I hope you will forgive me; I will not neglect writing another time. . . . You make fun of me when you say that I took away a copy of my likeness. I swear that I never did such a thing. I went yesterday to Brussels to have the bracelet and the portrait made, but for nothing else. Prince Christian and several other of my friends wanted me to go to the Assembly. I refused, and went for a walk. I saw La Reingrave, La Delvassine,[1] and other ladies, but they were so dull and unattractive that I mounted my horse and rode back to the camp. Indeed, my dearest, I find those ladies hideous now, though they pass for the handsomest in Brussels. What are they compared to you? Two years ago I thought them passable, but now I am astonished at my bad taste. They are as pale-faced and sickly as if they had had the fever; pallor is very fashionable in Brussels.

"How sweet is that part of your letter in which you say that if an accident had befallen me you would have hastened to my side and have never left me more! Why wasn't I riddled with bullets? Why couldn't those cowardly Frenchmen catch me? We are going to undertake something again soon, and then I will face the fire, and with intrepid courage brave the enemy. I will seek the most perilous places, and if I get wounded I shall hope to see

[1] Two beauties of Brussels.

you, hold you in my arms, and tell you how dearly I love you.

"I hear that your father is going to Luisburg; if so, you will probably be one of the party. Pray tell me your plans, for I know not where to write, nor when to see you. They say our troops will be quartered at Louvain or Dist; in that case I shall be nearer you. If your mother were still away at Wiesbaden, I might hope to see you without its being known; but what I fear most is that the Court of Celle will be at Epsdorff. In that event I shall lose patience, for you will be there a long time, and what shall I do at Hanover without you? I must tell you an ugly story about the Duke of Richmond; he was giving a party to Duke Frederick of Saxony and some women.[1] . . . I have altered my good opinion of him. Duke Frederick has promised me to come to the next carnival at Hanover, and you can easily guess why I press him. Is it to make me happy or unhappy? I say no more. Monsieur Kielmansegge is very anxious to go back to Hanover, and if His Highness asks it of the Duke they will allow him. I give you this piece of news as I am sure it will please you. . . . The Electress of Brandenburg is sending me compliments through Prince Ernest. I don't know what she means; perhaps she wishes to become your rival. How we should laugh at her! Farewell, dear heart."

[1] This anecdote is unfit for publication.

*The Princess to Königsmarck.*

"[Celle], *August* $\frac{6.}{16.}$

"*I* could not have carelessly allowed *three* posts to go by without sending any news to you, and when one loves to madness it is hard to be calm. I crave your pardon for all I wrote that has displeased you; you are right to attribute it to anger. Had you forgotten me, whatever I may have said, I could not have borne it quietly, for I claim you as *all* mine. I would stand up for you against the world. Pardon me, then; for what I wrote only came from excess of love.

"I am not astonished at Duke Frederick's indiscretion; it is so common to all men that I think you are the only one exempt from it. I should like to know whether you are not a little angry about La Marionette's complacency; it takes a good deal off the price of the favours she granted you. I felt a malicious joy with regard to that adventure. Put it against my account. I should much like to know what she says about Ferdi.[1] The Prince has answered my mother about my going with her to Wiesbaden; he leaves everything to the Duke, and says neither yea nor nay. He tells me the same thing, so we shall start in two days from now. I have already told you the Duke is quite agreeable. My father stays here,[2] and Max is going to visit the Electress

[1] Ferdi—*i.e.* Ferdinand, a favourite of the Electress of Brandenburg, probably a nobleman at the Court of Berlin.

[2] "This Court will the next week remove from hence: the Duke to follow his hunting, and the Duchess goes to Wiesbaden, near Mayence, for her health."—Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, August 5, 1692.

of Brandenburg; she will not come just yet. Since you don't wish me to go anywhere except to Wiesbaden, I will avoid Frankfort, and will try all I can to prevent my mother from going. She has determined to take me herself, or send me there to see the fair; but I will give it up, for I wish all my actions to mark my love and show my desire to please you. I will write to your sister[1] and tell her of our journey. I have not done so before because it was not settled, but I fear it will be too late for her to join us. You were not wise to wish her to keep watch over me. If I wished to deceive you, neither she nor anybody could prevent me. But let your mind be at rest; I would rather die a hundred deaths than suffer the thought to cross my mind.

"I could not finish my letter this afternoon. I had to make some calls with my mother, and on coming home I learned that the Electress of Brandenburg will be at Luisburg next week; she has already sent a list of her suite, so no doubt she is coming. I am vexed about it, for I was looking forward to going to Wiesbaden—more for the purpose, I assure you, of shunning the world than of seeking it. I am uncertain what will happen now. I may be compelled to go to Luisburg, and I dread that more than death. The Electress will be sure to spy on me, cross-question me, and watch all my actions, and she will find me so different from what I used to be that she will guess

[1] The Countess Aurora, who was then at Hanover. Many of the letters passed through her hands, though they were sometimes sent direct.

the reason. Never mind, this is the least of my cares. Prince Max is going the day after to-morrow to meet her, and will accompany her to Luisburg.[1] If I do not receive any letters commanding me to stay, I shall start on Tuesday."

*Königsmarck to the Princess.*

"HALLE, $\frac{July\ 31.}{August\ 9.}$

"Tell me how long you will be away and if the arrival of the Electress of Brandenburg will prevent you from carrying out your plans. Farewell, dear heart. I know a prisoner who longs to burst his bonds and seek your arms, but there must still be weeks of patience. How I am to be pitied! I have received a present from the French army—one hundred bottles of the best champagne; I will not drink a glass except to your toast."

"HALLE, [undated].

"So far from forgetting you, I only think of you, and I study all possible means of seeing you again. To that end I arranged with Monsieur de Goritz, if the battle had been victorious to us, to have borne the good news to our Court, and so perhaps to have had the joy of seeing and embracing you; but, my dear angel, Fortune did not favour my plan. All these accidents about the letters make me wretched. I am grieved at your anxiety on that account, but you accuse me unjustly, and, in turn, I claim you will ask my pardon as I did yours."

[1] "The Electress of Brandenburg is passing by here on her way to Luisburg, where the Hanoverian Court is at a country house."—Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, August 12, 1692.

*The Princess to Königsmarck.*

"[CELLE], *August* $\frac{8.}{18.}$

"I should have died with joy if you had come as you thought of doing; and, though you did not come, I am grateful to you for having had the thought. I am so absorbed in my love that I am becoming insensible to everything else; nothing can please me but to see you again and spend my life with you: as long as that cannot be, I shall always be wretched. I have already asked your pardon for the wrong I did you; I do it again, since you wish me. I am delighted to be wrong, and I only wish I had always been so mistaken. I, too, know a prison waiting for my prisoner with great impatience. If I told you all my troubles, all my sorrows, I should make you weep. My trip will last six or seven weeks. I hope we shall both return [to Hanover] about the same time. I must not see you the first time in public: my emotion would betray me. They still say there will be a second battle; it makes me tremble. I have not slept for many nights, and am rather unwell. I think it comes from loving you overmuch, but that is such a sweet sickness I do not wish to be cured. I will write to you as often as I possibly can, but do not blame me if you do not get my letters.

"I leave to-morrow. The Duchess Sophia has just written to my mother to say the Electress is coming, but as she wishes me a pleasant journey I no longer fear having to remain."

# CHAPTER XVII

## *THE VISIT TO WIESBADEN*

Why now do pangs of torment clutch thy heart,
Which with thy love should make thee overjoyed?

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI.

THE Electress of Brandenburg did not go to Luisburg after all. Elaborate preparations had been made for her reception, for Duke Ernest Augustus was anxious to gain his powerful son-in-law's support for the coveted Electorate, and so wished to treat his daughter with special honour. But the Elector of Brandenburg hung back, and at the eleventh hour the Electress changed her plans, to the great chagrin of her parents. By this time Princess Sophie Dorothea was well on her way to Wiesbaden, where she stayed with her mother for some weeks. Before returning to Hanover she visited the Frankfort fair. Frankfort was even then a place of considerable importance, and the annual fair was a carnival to which all the great world flocked from far and wide. It was very natural for the Princess to wish to see it when she was so near, and she hardly merited Königsmarck's reproaches for going. She writes to her lover *en route* to Wiesbaden :

"EINBEC,[1] *August* 12./22.

"I am writing haphazard; but I cannot exist any longer without assuring you that I love you, and absence only increases my passion. I am not telling you everything that has happened every day, for I fear my letter might be lost, and then all the different places I should have to name would disclose everything. I will send you a list when I arrive, if anything worth mentioning takes place. I think of you from morning to night; it is my only occupation and pleasure. I am so delighted to think I am getting nearer the time when we shall meet again. I have no end of dreams concerning that meeting; they are pleasant, though impossible. I am told you are losing money at play. I am grieved, but one cannot be lucky in everything; your gains in love must console you for your losses at cards. I hope you will return [to Hanover] about the same time as I do."

"[WIESBADEN], *August* 21./31.

"I reached here last night after twelve days' journey, which seemed as many centuries, because I could not hope to have news of you while we were travelling. I am hungering for your letters, and hoping that I shall have some to-morrow. Nothing took place on the journey worth mentioning, nor did I see a face worth remembering. I did nothing but eat, drink, and sleep, and I played cards sometimes with my mother. It is hardly worth while to send you an account of what I did every day, and, besides, as I said before,

[1] Einbec, a little town on the road.

I should have to name the different places I passed through, and that might reveal everything. The prudent Confidente advises me to do nothing of the kind; but if you do not trust me, I will send it, in spite of all. We are quite alone; the house is like a convent, and there is no one here but ourselves, so you can be at rest. But if *tout le monde* were here you would have nothing to fear: I am yours only. I wrote you once on the journey; I am sorry I could not do so oftener. About a league from Wiesbaden a courier came to me with a letter from La Marionette.[1] I am sending you a copy of it, and of another which she inclosed from her brother, who is with the army. I am much surprised at their contents. I don't know what object the little woman has in worrying me, for I have never thought of her nor her brother. Perhaps she wishes me to come to harm, so that she may have you all to herself; but she mustn't think she has to deal with a fool who gives herself away to the first man who comes along, as she does. My love for you is the joy and happiness of my life, the only love I have ever felt for any one; it will die with me.

"The Prince writes to me that another battle will

[1] *La Marionette* was a German princess, probably a princess of Hesse. The mention of her brother being "with the army" refers not to the campaign in Flanders, but to the fact that on the Upper Rhine, and along the frontier which separates France from Piedmont, there was a desultory war being carried on in connexion with the Palatinate. The letters mentioned are two, one from *La Marionette* commending her brother to the Princess and expressing a hope of meeting at the Frankfort fair, and the letter inclosed from her brother, containing extravagant expressions of his admiration of Sophie Dorothea.

shortly take place. Think of the sorrow his news causes me, for my life is bound up with yours. I hope God will answer the prayers I make for you; I say them with a pure heart: you make me quite devout. You are right in saying that it is misery to live absent from the loved one. I experience that truth every day, but I hope to be rewarded for all my trouble and sorrow when once I hold you in my arms. You will be very clever if you escape me again. I am thinking of the moment when I shall see you, and the thought fills me with transports of joy. I believe I shall die of rapture—pray God it may be so. My love is above everything: *I worship you.*

"They tell me the Electress of Brandenburg has postponed her visit.[1] She was to have arrived two days after I left. All the horses were ordered for her equipage; the Duke had given up to her his apartments at Luisburg, and they also brought music,—all that for nothing! They say her husband wished her to put off her visit until another time, but I feel sure she will not come; the postponement is only a pretext. It will make the Duke and Duchess very angry; in fact, it is mocking them, but it matters very little to me."

*Königsmarck to the Princess.*

"From the Camp of Ninove, *August* $\frac{13}{23}$.

"For five days I have not received any letter from you; but I know you are travelling, and that explains

[1] "Just now we have the news that the Electress of Brandenburg doth not come so soon as she intended, all things having been provided for her."—Colt's *Despatch*, Celle, August 12, 1692.

it. I hope to have news from Wiesbaden, for you can make no excuse about the post there. I am grateful for your anxiety about me when in the battle; it shows you have some fragment of love left for me still. But perhaps it would have been better for me to have been shot while fighting, for, though I am sure of myself, I cannot be sure of you. I know not if all they tell me about you is true. Your journey is much against my wishes, and I have taken a resolution which will astonish you greatly. On your love depends all my happiness; but, alas! it is like building on sand. But I cannot change my nature, and, however much I may try, I cannot root out my love for you. If ever there was a woman worthy to be loved, that one is surely you. I have one thing in common with many men—'I love a charming being, who is loved by many.' That is from a song, and I give it you for what it is worth; it does not come out of my brain,—that, alas! is too much worried with cares, jealousies, sorrows, and anxiety to be able to invent anything witty or clever. Farewell. I crave your forgiveness if I suspect you without cause."

*The Princess to Königsmarck.*

"WIESBADEN, *August* 23. *September* 3.

"I should like to know why you are angry and who has been telling you tales about me. I am greatly wounded by your want of confidence. If you trusted my love, and believed me incapable of treachery, you could not so easily credit all these silly tales.

"It puzzles me to tell you any news; we continue to be quite alone. You will see from my note yesterday that I have seen a few silly faces—happily only for a little while, for they left again the same day. I really enjoy being alone; it is as pleasant to me now as it might have been unpleasant formerly. It is you who have worked this change, and I can assure you it is not your least glorious achievement: in truth, people bore me and are in my way; solitude is far more to my taste. I am no longer equal to conversation; you fill my thoughts too much to leave my mind free.

"I have had a letter from the Duchess, who tells me the Prince is aware of everything said of him; she also tells me about the Cabinet, and that the Prince has written begging that all who invented the slander should be punished.[1] I don't think he is over-pleased, but it is immaterial to me.

"I hope, to-morrow, to have another of your letters. I shall not be able to sleep all night, for I am not satisfied with your last. I have just read it over again. You attribute my anxiety for you to come safely out of the battle to some 'fragment' of my love. So far from being a *fragment*, it is the result of the most ardent devotion ever felt by woman. In all you say there is a coldness that freezes me to the heart. I am pierced to the soul. But I take

[1] This may have some reference to Moltke's plot, in connexion with which Duchess Sophia was examined by the Cabinet. *Vide* Colt's *Despatch*, August 29, 1692: "The Duchess of Hanover hath been examined in several articles before the Duke and his Council."

some comfort in the thought that if you were wholly indifferent to me you would not be so sensitive. I would rather you were so hard, mortifying though it be, than that you should be indifferent. I am going to bed now, but I cannot get you out of my head; waking or sleeping, you are always in my thoughts. Good-night. You are the most perfect man in the world, but you are never satisfied,—that is your only defect. Cure yourself of it, and be all mine."

*Königsmarck to the Princess.*

"From the Camp at Denise, *August* $\frac{21.}{31.}$

"I am glad you say that if any hurt befall me you will not abandon me. I almost wish I could see you again without my legs if it would give me the joy of holding you always in my arms. But you need not fret yourself; they are losing all hope of doing anything in this campaign, and it must soon end. Therefore, resume again your merry looks and lively airs; tears and sadness do not agree with fairs and baths. It is true I am not so exact in writing as you. I will not dispute the point; I know you cannot always write, for sometimes you are prevented by other distractions. Alas! if you were to find real pleasure in loving and being loved you would be the most satisfied of women. I should have believed you had you said your heart was without passion, save the passion for journeys; but I must be pleased, provided the journeys do not let other passions enter in. This is what I have to fear. Ah! if you only mean what you say when you write,

'It is my desire to become an example of the tenderest love, the most perfect constancy that ever existed since the world began'!

"I assure you what Duke Frederick Augustus told me about La Marionette made little impression, for before that I was disgusted with her; her ways show the sort of woman she is. I have not yet even mentioned you to him. He cut himself with a sword and made a large wound in his head, trying to cut the head of one Montrany. I call upon him every day. He is most uncomfortable and dirty in his bed; all the bandages are swathed round his head, and, with that terrible mouth of his, he looks a very disagreeable object. But he is a good sort of prince. I wish he would become Elector, I should have a very good time. My sister Aurora is already at Hanover; I think both my sisters will soon join you. . . . The Electress of Brandenburg will not go, after all, to Luisburg, and the Court will soon be at Hanover. You heard about Ferdinand's affair some little time ago. Not only did he lose all his money, but he owed two thousand pistoles. The Huguenots who had won it from him could not get it, so they went to the Prince of Anhalt and demanded that they might be paid. The Prince sent orders to the illustrious lover to pay his debts before leaving Berlin. But Ferdinand, in a rage, went and told the Electress, and she was so annoyed at the affront offered to her fancy man that she sent word to the Prince of Anhalt that she was astounded at the liberty he had taken, and she would complain to the Elector, and so on. The Prince

begged her pardon. I believe Ferdinand's mistresses will find some means of satisfying his creditors and of getting him out of the scrape. But the funniest part of the story is to come. The Electress determined to take Ferdinand with her to Luisburg, but his acknowledged mistress begged her to leave him behind and she would pay the debts. The Electress replied with determination that she kept Ferdinand for *her* pleasure, and when she tired of him the other could do as she pleased, but until then she would keep him well. There is a happy man! As for his mistress, she may comfort herself, for the lover remains [at Berlin] and the Electress remains.

"I am waiting with extreme impatience for your news. If, haply, you have arrived, I hope my prayers will protect you from misfortune, and that you will compass your journey in perfect health. Since there seems so little chance of getting anything substantial from your parents, I do not see why you should be afraid of them, or why you flatter them, for everything that is to come to you after their death will come to you without that, so you can easily spare yourself the trouble. But you are very timid—so much the worse for you! They would be silly if they gave you anything when they see you are contented with fine words. I have won a thousand pistoles, but I may lose them again. The King has asked me to play with him in the Elector's tent, where he is breakfasting; but I don't know if my rage will let me go, for I am in the very devil of a rage. I am yours until the tomb."

WILLIAM OF ORANGE. [*To face p.* 326.

*(King William III. of England.)*

*The Princess to Königsmarck.*

"WIESBADEN, $\frac{\textit{August } 24.}{\textit{September } 3.}$

"Yesterday I received two of your letters, one very different from the other. One filled me with ecstasy. If I had held you in my arms I could have devoured you with kisses then and there. I will begin by answering all the nice and charming things you say, and then I will scold you for so easily believing all the lies they wrote to you about me. I deserve more than a little of the love you show me, for nothing equals my devotion.

"I have long ago forgiven your carelessness, though I did not get your letter until I had been *three times* to the post without finding any, not *twice*, as you say; but when your letter came it gave me such joy that I forgot all my sorrow and anxiety of a fortnight. One kind word from you is enough to bring me back from that other world of grief and pain.

"Since you went away I have found existence so wearisome that I have longed for death to put an end to the sorrows and troubles which, as you know, are many and threaten to overwhelm me. I hope you will not be foolish enough, or brave enough, to get wounded for the sake of seeing me the sooner. I would rather wait a long time than any hurt should befall you, though, believe me, I am so eager to embrace you that I am ill with longing. What you ask kept me awake all night. What would I not give for the thing to be possible on your part!

On my part it is easy, but I will say no more about it. We can never tell what the future has in store for us; but this I know—if anything should happen to you I should not survive it. If you had chosen a place to hide me from all the world you could hardly have found a likelier spot than this. It is away from all society, in utter solitude. At any other time I should have found it tiresome, for there is not a soul to speak to, and the people with us are anything but lively; but as I know your wishes it is a positive pleasure to be cloistered like this. It would have vexed me to find any man here: you would certainly have jumped to the conclusion that I came to seek him. I hardly know myself, and cannot understand how any woman can have changed as I have done. As I have told you a thousand times, I think of you only, and count everything else as nothing.

"I hope I may not go to Epsdorff; the Prince's return may prevent me. I shall do all I can to get out of it, for I would not delay a moment the joy I would buy with my blood—to see you once more and to seal with my lips my vows of love. You are admirable about your Duke Frederick Augustus. A fine test you would put me to! I shall be sorry if you place me under an obligation not to look at him, though it is scarcely worth while, for surely you need not fear. You know full well that you are far above them all. You see, I am giving you back all the sweet things you tell me about La Reingrave and Madame Delvassine.

"But I am too long in justifying myself concerning your accusations in your other letter. Please explain, for I do not understand. You speak as if I had done something foolish, or, if I were too far away, I nevertheless wished to do it. If you did not receive my letters for a week it was not my fault. I wrote to you secretly from Celle by the post which was to leave after me, and I wrote to you on the journey. It is true I only wrote once, but it was impossible for me to do so oftener. You must have had the spleen very badly to wish you had been shot in the battle. I am anxious to hear what new fabrications they have told you about me; I cannot imagine what they can be. I am wholly innocent. I went over everything in my mind last night to see if any one could have given a crooked turn to any of my actions; but they have been all so straight that they could not have been maligned. The tale-bearers must have simply invented lies on purpose to make you quarrel with me. Alas! I see too well that they wish to estrange us, and you are simple enough to fall into the trap. It is very hard that, however much I may strive to prove my love and devotion, you blindly believe all these foolish tales. I should be mad if I were to give you the least cause to complain about me, for I would rather die than do it. There is madness indeed in the passion I have for you. I cannot understand how any one can love as I love; you will never feel or experience it unless you 'build on sand,' as you say you do when you trust me. Only be to me as I am to you; I ask no other happiness."

*Königsmarck to the Princess.*

"DENISE, *September* 3.

"I have received the letter you wrote from Einbec. I see in it, with much joy, that you have not forgotten me yet. I greatly wish, on your return, you may be able to say the same things to me; but alas! what have I not to fear? You always speak of my not exposing myself to danger, but you are exposed to the eyes of many handsome cavaliers. Who knows but that among the crowd at the fair you will see some one who may wound you. The sharper the attack the greater the danger. *Mon Dieu!* if you are wounded what shall I do? Where shall I turn? Why are you so lovely?

"I have just returned from a walk with the King. The Duke of Richmond was there, like a thrush, committing all kinds of extravagances. Duke Frederick Augustus has decamped without saying anything to any one. He owes more than fifteen thousand pistoles; I hold eight thousand against him. He leaves behind him many people who speak badly of him, but I have a great regard for him personally, though his conduct is devilish bad. As to having too much wit, he has none at all; he has not even won the approval of the ladies in Brussels. You were right when you withheld him yours. The Elector [of Bavaria] went the day before yesterday to Ghent, which he likes better than Brussels. He finds the ladies prettier there, but as I have not seen them at either place I do not know whether he is right."

*The Princess to Königsmarck.*

"[WIESBADEN, *Tuesday*, 30.][1]

". . . . Perhaps I am mistaken, but I detect a vein of irony in your letter which is far from pleasant. I have no wish to see any cavalier, for you would surely think I came here because of him; but I need not have any uneasiness on that score at Wiesbaden, for there is not a decently dressed man about the place. You will have nothing to reproach me with about this journey, thank God; for I dread your criticisms. You are the most troublesome creature when you set about them. What matter even if there be a man within a hundred leagues of me? Why should you, the handsomest and most fascinating of all men, fear him? I cannot forgive your mistrust. You do not believe my promises or you would not perpetually worry me about my demeanour. If you could see the hole I am in even *you* would be satisfied.

"Here is my day: I played cards with my mother all the afternoon. I rested a long time on my bed. I went for a walk with my women. I supped, and I am going to bed. I hope you will be satisfied."

*Königsmarck to the Princess.*

"[Undated.]

"You depict the place where you are as so dreadfully dull that I have not the heart to forbid my pet from being cheered a little. The Frankfort fair will give

[1] The beginning of this letter is missing.

you some amusement. I am sorry not to be one of your party. What about your mother? When will she take the road? and will she return with you to Hanover, or is she going to stay on at Wiesbaden? Those who wrote to me from Hanover only sent me the news of the place; they didn't mention you, therefore don't be angry, there are no tale-bearers, and if there were I should not believe them."

*The Princess to Königsmarck.*

"[WIESBADEN], *September* $\frac{5.}{15.}$

"I am delighted to hear from you that the campaign will soon end; but it will not end as soon as I wish, for I am awaiting your return with an impatience which only equals my love.

"We are still alone here, and if any tell you the contrary they are very badly informed. I am going to the fair, and La Marionette has arranged for me to meet her there. My mother made me write and ask her to be at Frankfort the same time as ourselves. I implore you, do not *get ill*; nothing will take place there to make you so. I am grateful to you for giving me leave to do as I please; you know well that you risk nothing in granting me freedom, for I am incapable of abusing it. I know to the tip of my little finger everything I ought to do to please you, and I never fail in doing it. But can I be so sure of you? Shall I see you again as tender as before? I flatter myself, yes; but if it be otherwise I will not live a moment. I know no

happiness in the world save the one of being loved by you; I ask for no other, for you are the source of all my joy."

*Königsmarck to the Princess.*

"DENISE, *September* $\frac{10.}{20.}$

"When you have read my previous letter you will see I have had very little correspondence at Hanover with any one concerning you. The fear our affair may be discovered makes me go with a bridle in my mouth, and I have few acquaintances to whom I would confide such a secret. I think the Duchess of Hanover answered the Prince very well; she is careful to support the Cabinet. She is just like the Countess Platen; I fear some day she will have the same power. . . . I have been looking forward to seeing you again soon, but the news from Hanover tells me that the Duke is going to hunt at Epsdorff, where your father is now.[1] The Prince is going there too, and, as the Duchess of Hanover is going to visit the Electress of Brandenburg, you are sure to be one of the hunting party.

"The Electress of Brandenburg has been in a great rage with Montalbany. She joked him at supper because people said he had such thin, lean legs. Next morning he waited on the Electress in her chamber, and she laughed at him again about the same thing. He lost his temper, and, kicking his leg up on the

[1] Colt mentions that the Duke of Celle was at Epsdorff (*vide Despatch*, September 15, 1692); and he was also there on October 7. On the 10th he went to Göhre.

toilet table, said to her, '*Voilà*, *Madame*, all those who have told you such things have lied.' The page-in-waiting, seeing his impertinence had carried him too far, tried to make him retire; but Montalbany was in such a rage that he gave him a fillip which made the blood flow out of his mouth and eyes. The Electress flew into a furious passion, forbade Montalbany ever to see her again, and ordered him from her presence. But she did not long keep to that resolution, for one of his friends begged and prayed for him so hard that she made it up again. They say here it was Ferdinand, and the scandal does much harm to that lady. Prince Ernest writes nothing of it to me.

"In one of my letters the news from Hanover tells me that my two sisters have gone to Wiesbaden. I fear they will find you no longer there, which will be a disappointment to them, as they looked forward to paying their court to you at Wiesbaden, since there is so little chance of their doing it elsewhere, except at Celle. It is annoying, for they would like to show their devotion, but have not the opportunity of doing so. . . . What shall I do if you go to Epsdorff? I shall not see you until the carnival; and I *must* see you, whatever it may cost me. Try to think how I can do so, and let me know of a plan. I should like to know, too, if you wish me to wear my own hair this winter, or whether you would rather see me in a wig. Your wishes will be my law in this as in other things; in the merest trifle I shall always study your sweet will."

*The Princess to Königsmarck.*

"[WIESBADEN], *September* $\frac{11.}{21.}$

"How happy I am to have a lover like you! The more I read your letters the more I am delighted with them. No one ever had such noble qualities; no one could imagine a more gracious lover. I am *so* grateful to you for giving me leave to go to the fair.

"Last night I received La Marionette's answer. She will be at Frankfort the same day as ourselves. What would I not give for you to be with us! I should die of joy. Nothing can equal the impatience I feel to see you again; but I must be patient, though it is very hard when one loves to distraction. I do not know yet whether there will be any one else at Frankfort. I shall write to you as soon as I get there and give you an account of everything I do; but be sure that if all the delights and charms of the earth were at the fair you would fill my mind wholly, and I shall do nothing that does not show my love for you—a love beyond all that I can express. I defy the whole world to equal me in tenderness and faithfulness; and you deserve it wholly, for you are a king among men.

"La Confidente has been far from well the last few days, and I am anxious about her; but I hope the change will soon set her right, for this air is bad, and I am dying with impatience to leave it. Here are so many sick people that I fear I may become one of them myself. I should be so distressed if you were to find me ugly on your return

that I would make up on purpose to please you. They say I am getting stouter. I am going to bed now, but I feel very lonely in it, for, since you left, how many prayers, what eagerness, what desire, to see you again! Good-night, my dear one. If I hold thee once again thou wilt never escape me more."

*Königsmarck to the Princess.*

"DENISE, *September* $\frac{16.}{26.}$

"Since you have asked me to explain all I have against you I will make a clean breast of it;[1] four things, of which the last is the worst. The first is that you did not mention that you saw Spar at Celle. The second, it gave you great pleasure to meet Guldenlon at Wiesbaden. The third, although you assured me you did not care about going to the fair, you seize any pretext for going. You pretend it is because your mother wishes it! The fourth is the new rival [the Prince of Hesse]. He is near you, in his own country. His sister (La Marionette) pleads for him. You are going to the fair, and he will be there with his *maquerelle*; and if he goes to Hanover, his old sister, who is the most cunning of women and well versed in intrigue, will be there too, on the pretext of a visit, to take him to your chamber, even though you were abed. I will not suffer such things; I would rather go to the Indies. It would not be pleasant for me to find a lover in your

[1] Evidently in answer to the Princess's letter of $\frac{August\ 24.}{September\ 3.}$

chamber, while I, who worship you, must not enter. But I forget, he is a prince, and for that reason privileged by his rank. All the same, I yield him nothing. . . . I fear this letter would be offensive if I believed all I wrote; but no, dear angel, I know your virtue and your constancy, and so I warn you to be careful. Two women are with you, one of whom has already done her best to make you hate me—your mother. My dear Léonnisse (I give you that name, for it is that of an incomparable woman, if you are anxious to know whom, read the Duc de Bourbon's romance, *Prince de Tarente*), what should I do without you? I have met with a lot of bad luck in life, but at least I have had the joy of worshipping you, and from the first day I saw you my heart was touched, though I was only a mere boy and unable to declare my passion.[1] But even then I loved you, and I love you now. As my love for you was born with me, so to speak, so it will also die with me. Oh, Léonnisse! if you only knew how I worship you, you would freely excuse all the follies passion makes me commit and all the suspicions that take shape in my brain. The Elector [of Bavaria] swears at me about my gloomy temper, which he says I brought from Hanover. That is true; but I am the only one who knows the cause of my complaint, and the remedy. I am in a most piteous state night and day. I open my eyes only to weep, and my mouth opens only to sigh. You ask me to tell you the vow that I have taken. It is to love

[1] Another reference to their early friendship at Celle.

you as long as a drop of blood remains in my veins, and though you may change to me, I shall never change to you.

"I have seen your first lover, the one you were on the point of marrying.[1] What a face! They tell me his wife is at Ghent, and the ladies of the place will not pay their respects to her, she gives herself such airs. She sees nobody; but you would have enjoyed yourself like a queen. Think how pleased I should have been, for you would only be two hours from me, and your husband in the army!

"Duke Frederick Augustus has left the army with very few honours; he owes money right and left. He left Brussels under a cloud, for he gave a powder to the first jeweller who dunned him which sent the poor man nearly mad. The rogue knew he was going to bolt, but he concealed his intentions and still made promises. The other day I dined with him at the Comte d'Egmonts, when he made me many hypocritical promises. That is the way young men go on nowadays; I give them a good sound talking to. The season is getting so cold that every one is beginning to speak about winter quarters."

*Königsmarck to Fräulein von Knesebeck.*

"You are right to think the visit to Frankfort would displease me, especially as I begged and prayed her not to go. However, all can be repaired if she only stops one day there. It is not fair. Did she

[1] (?) The Prince of Wolfenbüttel.

not say she hoped I would not go often to Brussels? That was sufficient. I only set foot there for four hours for a game of tennis; I did not even go to Ghent. The wealthy marriage they proposed for me I rejected from the first.[1] I also refused to undertake the journey of which you know,[2] though it was the only thing to save my property. Count Oxanstern[3] assured me that if I had gone the King [of Sweden] would have made me an offer of a regiment with the title of general, and Marshal Hasbert also said that if I had attached myself to the service of the King I should at present be a general. Consider, dear friend, what I have sacrificed and what she is doing, and then say who is in the wrong. This is between ourselves, for I do not wish her to know about this at all, so pray don't mention it."

*Königsmarck to the Princess.*

"GAVERN, *October* $\frac{4.}{14.}$

"I am extremely sorry to hear that La Confidente is unwell. I trust, however, that the gaiety of the fair will soon put her to rights. I am glad to see you are going to leave that unhealthy place (Wiesbaden) without being attacked by any complaint or illness.

[1] This marriage has been alluded to before—in 1691.

[2] The mission to Sweden; he went no further than Hamburg.

[3] A Swedish noble of high rank, sometime envoy at Hanover. This letter is very characteristic, and undoubtedly shows that Königsmarck had made sacrifices of his worldly prospects to be near the object of his devotion. But it was hardly generous of him to remind the Princess of it, even indirectly, for she had made a much greater sacrifice for him.

You need not be so very anxious on my behalf about your looks, for I could not find you more beautiful than I do already, and if you wish to "make up" for me, I shall not see you for some time, and your visit [to the fair] will have fatigued you. Had you done so *after* your trip I might have flattered myself it was for me; but in any case your care will not be thrown away. The fine world of Frankfort will have the benefit, and you will have the satisfaction of finding yourself hated by the ladies of the city, for you will surpass them all in beauty and take away their lovers. You have made so many conquests in so many different countries that I do not doubt for a moment that you will enjoy the same triumphs in Frankfort, and include that town in the list of your trophies. You seek the banks of the Rhine and the Maine for people to admire you and rave about you; but why do you not cast a glance towards this unfortunate country? Here are kings, dukes, electors, and princes ready to woo, and who of them could resist your charms?

"We arrived here after a march of thirty-six hours without a rest; some of our men fell from their horses, and others have the fever. Several wanted to entertain the Prince at Ghent: Goritz wanted to give him a dinner at his wife's, Ovenair wanted to give him a livelier one with loose women. They tossed dice for it, and Ovenair won. The Prince told me I could make one of the party. Monsieur Goritz goes to the Hague, the Prince starts on the 15th, and Monsieur de Königsmarck goes to Brussels to cure

himself if he can. Here in a few words is news you will not much relish ; but, to finish with a *bonne bouche*, I vow to you with much submission that no one on earth could be your more humble servant than I."

END OF VOL. I.

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